

Springs Public Campaigns

Collaboration Workshop

December 3, 2019

Participants

Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD
Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting
Emily Brown, DEP NPS
Melissa Corbett, Wakulla County
Francis Diaz, Marketing for Change
Michon Fabio, Marion County
Stacie Greco, Alachua County EPD
Hollie Greer, Alachua County EPD
Alisia Holland, Alachua County EPD
Moira Homann, DEP
Marie Lackey, Seminole County
Emily Lawson, Orange County

Katrina Locke, Volusia County
Amanda Marek, UF-IFAS Marion Extension
Megan Martin, Volusia County
Tina McIntyre, UF-IFAS Seminole
Jennifer Mitchell, SJRWMD
Amanda Peck, DEP NPS
Mary Paulic, DEP
Danielle Ramsey, Volusia County
Michele Sager, SWFWMD
Claire Stapley, SWFWMD
Shannon Wetzels, Seminole County
YiLin Zhuang, IFAS Marion

Welcome and Introductions

Tiffany Busby introduced herself as the facilitator. She introduced Mary Paulic and Moira Homann as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) meeting organizers and points-of-contact. Tiffany thanked YiLin Zhuang and the University of Florida-Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF-IFAS) in Marion County for the use of their facility for the meeting.

Presentations

Marion County Extension Education Outreach Activities --YiLin Zhuang

YiLin gave a PowerPoint on her public education program related to well/drinking water safety and septic system maintenance.

- About a third of Marion County residents use private wells for water supply.
- Property owners don't understand what to test for in their well water and that there is a possibility of contamination.
- Onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (OSTDS) information is tied into the well information presented; generally, the public is more interested in well/drinking water information than they are in OSTDS information.
- The processing of 20 bacteria samples per month is funded by Marion County.
- Homeowners are trained in the workshop on how to collect samples. They drop off the sample after the workshop, the lab processes the sample and the results are back within a week. The results go to YiLin and she interprets the results and reports them to the homeowner. The lab prefers that someone else answer homeowner questions.
- YiLin has a 69 % return rate on samples (136/196) after her workshops, which is much higher than similar programs in other areas/states.

- Of those returned, ~20 % (33 samples) have been contaminated. YiLin immediately notifies homeowners if their sample is contaminated and she follows up with email instructions for shock chlorination.
- YiLin is considering offering workshops in other locations (e.g., in the Ocala National Forest or near Marion Oaks).
- YiLin has the same attendance rates if the workshops are held in the afternoon (retired people prefer the afternoons) versus evenings.

The discussion included the following topics:

- There was a suggestion to make sure that the advertisements for the workshops are clear that there are no sales involved. Also, the ads could mention the lab costs of \$65 are free to participants.
- There was a question about the possibility of testing for nitrogen along with bacteria. YiLin explained that she has a contract rate with the lab. The homeowner can pay for nitrate analysis (\$35) but the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) is not currently sponsoring nitrate analysis. YiLin noted that they can also process for lead (Pb) and some samples have come back high for lead.
- There was a suggestion about using the “Next Door” app to advertise the workshops in certain areas/neighborhoods.

Volusia County Education Outreach Activities--Katrina Locke

Katrina gave a PowerPoint on the Volusia County green infrastructure projects and partnerships.

- Katrina explained that the county worked with the Marine Resources Council and many organizations on expanding the “Be Floridian Now” campaign.
- The Tampa Bay Estuary Program allowed them to use their graphic.
- Fertilizer retailers have flyers attached to their shelves in the fertilizer section.
- Speaking directly to the staff at the stores has been very helpful.
- The county is training on Green Industries education.
- Katrina provided an example of the store flyer.
- The social marketing for OSTDS pollution is complicated because it is not a binary question (yes/no). There are more choices such as sewer, OSTDS upgrade, etc.
- The county hired UPPERCASE to help them.
- With Facebook, they have targeted southwest Volusia County. They could not fund the prize (a gift card) with their grant. They did get a bigger response rate when they offered a gift card (they awarded 10 gift cards).
- In July 2019 they ran three focus groups. There were lots of questions about the messenger in the materials during the focus group discussion.
- The county has a Save Our Springs and Rivers Academy, which includes a mock County Council meeting.
- They are working in the Spring Hill area on community resilience through green infrastructure with a Barry University grant. This area has water and socio-economic issues and is historically an African American and Hispanic community. They will be holding two resiliency workshops in Spring Hill.

Seminole County Education Outreach Activities--Marie Lackey (Seminole County) and Tina McIntyre (UF-IFAS Extension, Seminole County)

Marie and Tina gave a PowerPoint on the Seminole County efforts.

- Marie noted that partnering with IFAS Extension has been very helpful.
- Tina explained that marketing efforts have targeted different groups such as homeowners' association (HOA) professionals and Rotary Clubs. They have used public service announcements (PSAs) and radio shows to get the word out.
- To promote their fertilizer workshops, they give away a 32-pound bag of fertilizer.
- They changed the name of the workshop to target those homeowners that fertilize; they don't need to educate homeowners that already don't fertilize.
- They have three different PSAs: stormwater; water efficiency; and fertilizer use. They use catch phrases in each of the 4-second, 7-second, and 30-second PSA lengths.
- They have used Channel 6 (WKMG) focus groups to test their materials.
- Seminole County is in the process of updating their fertilizer website at fertilizeflorida.com.
- They use digital ads on ClickOrlando.com, targeted at homeowners and social channels.
- They use Over the Top (OTT) Channel, managed by WKMG, where full-length videos can be shown.
- The Be Floridian is more coastally orientated, so they are working on an inland theme.
- In the past, the fertilizer manufacturer Sunniland has been helpful and provided the free fertilizer. However, as their ordinance phases in, the requirements are changing from 50 % to 65 %. The fertilizer companies—including Sunniland—are not planning to stock the 65 % fertilizer product, so that is an issue. It is a complex situation.
- It was noted that IFAS has a website where the public can look up the local fertilizer requirements, but since there will be a change in the Seminole County requirements, the information is changing over time.
- They have applied for a grant (not yet confirmed) to create fertilizer videos for big box stores along with flyers and posters. They are working with manufacturers and with the Master Gardeners.
- The county is also working on creating a certification program for commercial applicators, learning from the program in Pinellas County.
- The inland theme has been conceived and can be shared in 2020. The jingle will be done in February 2020.

Alachua County Education Outreach Activities--Stacie Greco

Stacey gave a PowerPoint on the Alachua County efforts.

- In Alachua County, the largest water user is public supply and the most water use is for irrigation.
- The county is working on both the regulatory and education levels to change water use. The county has applied for funding to continue its Turf Swap Rebate Program beyond January 31, 2019. This program has a 50 % rebate of up to \$2,000 per property.
- The county had license tag grants in 2011 and 2012 to conduct focus groups and interviews about behaviors related to springs health. The results indicate that many adults are unaware of the source of their water. Resident worried about water supply often cited experience living in other states with extreme water shortages.

- Working on shifting the perception of a beautiful/ideal yard—away from turf.
- Stacie mentioned that she pursued working with a meteorologist on the television news to help advise fertilizer applications, but it didn't go too far.
- The county has a website called www.MyYardMyWater.org and also www.AlachuaCountyWater.org.
- Working on educating builders on preferences for low water use landscapes.
- Creating a research-based fertilizer campaign.
- Stacie would like DEP to extend its OSTDS nitrogen-enhancement program to include Alachua County to promote retrofits.
- Stacie is completing a report on the county's marketing tools and offered to share them with the group via Mary Paulic when the report is complete.

DEP Department of Environmental Assessment and Restoration (DEAR)—Mary Paulic and Moira Homann

- Mary reported that the Florida Legislature is having an early session that begins in January.
- There is a springs project underway in cooperation with the On Top of the World HOA.
- There is a purchase order with Drs. Eban Bean and AJ Reisinger at UF. They are studying the benefits of a soil amendment prior to landscaping on residential properties. This study will look at places in the state where this action may be beneficial and whether it will reduce water use and fertilizer needs. They will be drafting a guidance document on when and where this may be appropriate.
- UF is considering a pilot project in Alachua County.
- It was noted that Dr. Bean is doing a project in Volusia County with the Victoria Park HOA that includes public education.
- Mary explained that DEP had a fact-finding meeting recently with Dr. Bean where they discussed what low impact development (LID) and management activities would work in karst areas. This included discussions with a number of local governments (Orange County, Seminole County, Alachua County, Hernando County, and the City of Tallahassee) as well as the St. Johns River Water Management District. DEP invited Lake and Wakulla counties, but they were unable to attend.
- A guidance document may result from these conversations.
- DEP is waiting for a scope of work from Dr. Bean on the potential for preparing a LID guidance.
- Moira noted that while the springs BMAP meetings have been largely on hold during the challenge period for some of the springs BMAPs, the annual reporting of projects does continue.
- Requests for the Statewide Annual Report ("STAR") were sent and responses are due by January 15, 2020.

DEP Division of Water Restoration Assistance (DWRA)—Amanda Peck and Emily Brown

- Amanda encouraged everyone to include any DEP contract numbers in their annual reporting, as that linkage helps DEP to track how funding and BMAP credits are related.

- She noted that the grant solicitations are now combined so the TMDL and §319 Grants are under one application process. Projects are selected by the end of the year. The application process will re-open for 2020 in the March to April timeframe.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has switched its focus for §319 funding to emphasize green infrastructure in stormwater projects, so keep that in mind when planning stormwater projects and applying for funding.
- Emily added that DEP and the water management districts pay for the Florida Friendly Landscaping program. They are evaluating the program now including a survey of the agents and the master gardeners. The results should be completed in December 2019. Emily expects to hear recommendations for more use of social media (e.g., Pinterest) and for re-design of the materials. DEP is considering a new name for the program—Florida Friendly Communities. Emily reminded everyone that the program includes the Green Industries BMP Program and Florida Yards & Neighborhoods.
- Emily shared that DEP is planning to hold some focus groups as well as forming an advisory group to develop a new stormwater nonpoint source education toolkit. They are using the Be Floridian program as a baseline. They hope to provide a more consistent stormwater message around the state. Amanda is open to volunteers for the advisory group.
- A suggestion was made to provide an accessible repository for survey data—so others can benefit from the surveys that have already been done.
- Emily noted that there is a central repository for public information materials already available online.
- The DWRA staff are also coordinating with the municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) group (led by Borja Crane-Amores) to give them access to the same materials, so local governments are getting access to the information from both the funding and the regulatory groups.
- A concern was voiced about the length of the DEP long-term response survey and that there are too many questions to expect participants to answer.
- Amanda and Emily offered to follow up on the long-term survey and to consider making the questions more specific to the principles covered in the course applicable to the survey.

Orange County –Emily Lawson

- Emily reported that Orange County is collecting data from an isotope study and they expect the results to be ready early in 2020. They are still determining how to present the results. They have a Fertilizer and Outreach Coordinator (Jacques) who is responsible for reaching out to stores and checking on them and their fertilizer.
- Commercial applicators can get a county decal when they are trained in Green Industries Best Management Practices (BMPs). So far, the county has issued about 700 decals.
- The county's fertilizer ordinance is not a complete summer ban/blackout period, but only trained applicators are allowed to apply fertilizer in the summer. Online training is available.
- The county is working with Seminole County on sending a letter to the fertilizer manufacturers about their requirements. They are also communicating with their cities and with IFAS.

- An intern put together a Story Map for the Water Atlas. There is a water quality dashboard on the site.
- Commissioner Christine Moore has been active in reaching out to homeowner's associations and having neighborhood conversations about adding sewer service. She is working with the utilities to plan a possible pilot study.
- The Orange County education campaigns includes working with Marketing for Change, the contractor that designed the Be Floridian campaign. This is in the research phase right now, which is ending soon. They will synthesize the information from the research phase and then make recommendations for the direction of the campaign.

Big Picture Comments—All

- Mary noted that DEP DEAR is pursuing more education efforts with the Florida Park Service (FPS). Mary hopes to create some consistent messages and to get the FPS more engaged with springs issues.
- There was a reminder to ask DWRA/Trina Vielhauer about expanding the OSTDS enhancement funding to Alachua County.
- Amanda reminded everyone to reach out to her if you are interested in being involved with the advisory committee for the new nonpoint source toolkit.
- Someone suggested Mary/Moira to encourage the Suwannee River Water Management District to attend these meetings.

Action Items

1. Stacie is completing a report on the county's marketing tools and offered to share them with the group via Mary Paulic when the report is complete.
2. Amanda and Emily offered to follow up on the long-term survey and to consider making the questions more specific to the principles covered in the course applicable to the survey.
3. Mary noted that DEP DEAR is pursuing more education efforts with the FPS. Mary hopes to create some consistent messages and to get the FPS more engaged with springs issues.
4. There was a reminder to ask DWRA/Trina Vielhauer about expanding the OSTDS enhancement funding to Alachua County.
5. Amanda reminded everyone to reach out to her if you are interested in being involved with the advisory committee for the new nonpoint source toolkit.
6. Someone suggested Mary/Moira to encourage the Suwannee River Water Management District to attend these meetings.