

Springs Public Campaigns

Collaboration Workshop

June 11, 2020

Participants

Ginger Adair, Volusia County
Eban Bean, University of Florida
Julie Bortles, Orange County
Alys Brockway, Hernando County
Emily Brown, DEP NPS Program
Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting
Kevin Coyne, DEP
Mike Dalsis, DEP
Hollie Greer, Alachua County EPD
Michon Fabio, Marion County
Mark Heidecker, City of Tallahassee
Moira Homann, DEP
Marie Lackey, Seminole County
Katrina Locke, Volusia County

Celeste Lyon, DEP
Evan Martin, DEP
Megan Martin, Volusia County
Jennifer Mitchell, SJRWMD
Kim Ornberg, Seminole County
Mary Paulic, DEP
Amanda Peck, DEP
Somer Pell, Wakulla County
Zach Roundtree, Marion County
Courtney Shoen, City of Tallahassee
Claire Stapley, SWFWMD
Lisa VanHoudt, DEP
Shannon Wetzel, Seminole County
YiLin Zhuang, IFAS Marion County

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.

Presentations

Draft Guidance for Amending Urban Soils with Organic Soil Amendments – Dr. Eban Bean, University of Florida Program for Resource Efficient Communities

Eban reviewed the guidance document and how it is organized. Part 1 covers urban soils to cover a contextual understanding of the situation in which you are working. The development process really changes the natural soils. Activities such as traffic as well as wetting and drying effects the soils. Soil compaction limits the depth for plant growth. New soils/fill brought to the site may bury or strip the prior organic layer.

Part 2 of the guidance focuses on the soil amendment. The section covers the benefits that compost can have at a site. Not all compost is the same. For example, materials that are brown and green are important (carbon and nitrogen content). High temperatures are important to prevent pathogens. Eban showed a table with ranges of different compost properties. The U.S. Composting Council (USCC) has a “Seal of Testing Assurance.” Water conservation increases the water holding capacity and translates overall to landscape quality.

Part 3 of the guidance covers implementation. The first step is soil evaluation including the options for soil or fill material. The choices may have very different characteristics. Eban discussed the amendment characteristics for urban landscaping. There are risks with immature compost to the landscape such as odor or a high carbon to nitrogen ratio. There is an initial pulse

of nutrients that come out of the compost. The release is not persistent but can occur. There is a goal to have one-page field guide that a foreman can use as a quick reference for soil amendments.

Part 4 includes longer term considerations. Typical recommendations include how much soil amendment to include and a reduction in Institute of Food and Agricultural Studies (IFAS) irrigation times. A developing area of research is related to soil amendments, along with irrigation reductions (to maintain viable turf) and soil amendment rates.

An example ordinance approach has been developed; Eban has been working with Tom Ankersen and the University of Florida (UF) Environmental Law Clinic in which law students are involved. The students reviewed example ordinances from western states and how they could be adaptable to other communities. Their goal was for the approaches to be flexible as more information becomes available over time. Eban reviewed the structure of the ordinance. They are currently seeking stakeholder review and feedback of the draft ordinance, particularly from local governments and the landscape industry/producers.

On Top of the World (OTOW) Runoff Study– Dr. Eban Bean, University of Florida Program for Resource Efficient Communities

A UF graduate student, Jovana Radovanovic, has conducted an 18-month study on 24 homes in the OTOW community where three types of soil treatments were compared: 1). Where compost was used at the site; 2). Where there were compacted soils filled with top dressing; or 3). There were just compacted soils. Eban shared some preliminary results of Jovana's research, so the numbers are not final. Some 15-16 storm events were studied for reduced stormwater runoff and/or changes in the nitrogen species. A difference was not observed in concentrations, but the runoff volumes were different. The water quality was not affected but the water volumes were reduced.

Mike Dalsis asked about the depth for the lysimeters in the study. Eban responded that the lysimeters collected water at about a 10-centimeter depth below the surface. Courtney Shoen asked about the ordinance guidance and will it include language examples. Eban showed some examples. The draft ordinance guidance has not yet been distributed for review. Eban will reach out to Mary to seek some review from this group. The timeline for the ordinance guidance development is being reworked due to Covid-19.

FDEP Activities

Low Impact Design (LID) for Sensitive Groundwater Areas Proposed Guidance

Mary Paulic noted that sensitive groundwater areas are a priority for controlling nitrogen inputs. These areas may not all be karst—they may be areas with high water tables or be in coastal areas. Managing stormwater for groundwater quality has unique challenges and traditional stormwater management that focuses on runoff may not be as useful for improving groundwater quality. Last November, DEP met with selected local government to ask for input.

Outcomes of this discussion include the following:

- Current programs provide some incentive for installing LID features, but more is needed (e.g., financial, philosophical buy-in, and a wholistic approach). Some of the challenges include resistance to change and lack of buy-in to incorporate LID guidance and requirements into the regulatory process. There is also a lack of data on water quality benefits of LID practices. Mary outlined other opportunities.
- Project purpose to get more information to evaluate and assemble applicable guidelines and practices for sensitive groundwater areas. Three objectives have been developed.

Tiffany asked what the timetable was for the project. Mary hopes to have the contract in place by August 2020 and then the project is expected to take about 18-months. Julie Bortles asked if there will be another meeting with stakeholders on LID incentives. Mary responded that it is the intent for DEP to meet again with stakeholders and engage some other interested parties as well.

LID Proposal/Florida Friendly Landscaping (FFL) Reboot

Emily Brown reported that based on past feedback, LID technical training was the most important priority as well as developing standard presentation materials that could help unify the message, while making them locally customizable. There is an effort to develop a “statewide manual” but it is really more of a “statewide LID guidance.” The meetings for this effort will be coordinated with the sensitive groundwater guidance effort that Mary outlined. The timeframe for the LID proposal is more of a 2-year process. A contract is being issued to a marketing firm to support this effort. A variety of materials will be developed that will be customizable and related to nonpoint sources, Florida Friendly Landscaping (FFL), and LID. Emily indicated that some draft materials should be sharable for our next meeting with this group. Emily noted that DEP has a lot of landscaping topics and materials. The process will rebrand and update some of the materials and organize them, so they are easy to find.

Flip My Florida Yard

The FFL program has had the “In A Minute” radio show. These are 1-minute segments available at FFLminute.com. The FFL television show is called “Flip My Florida Yard.” The previously created Season 1 (5 episodes) have been edited into a one-hour special that conform to DEP policies and recommendations. The first airing of the one-hour special is this weekend in Orlando market. It will air in different markets on different days. Emily will share the airing schedule when she receives it. The new season 1, funded by DEP, will air at the end of March 2021—after March Madness. In a few weeks, homeowners can apply for their yards to be flipped. Anyone can apply (with a few exceptions). Emily showed an abridged version of a “Flip” episode. Hollie Greer asked if folks that could participate in both “Turf Swap” and the “Flip” episodes. Amanda added that the production team is scaling back the magnitude of the projects, so that the type of changes is manageable for homeowners to perform them on their own. The producers also plan to demonstrate how to present to a homeowner’s association (HOA) board and how to respond if the plan is rejected.

Mark Heidecker asked about the homeowner application process for “Flip My Florida Yard.” Emily responded that the producers will provide links to an application on Survey Monkey that anyone can fill out. This way, the application links can be easily shared and promoted. Emily

said that efforts will be made to highlight local programs as they film in different locations. Mark asked about a press release related to the application process being open, and Emily responded those are forthcoming. Amanda added that in February 2021 there will be more teasers and promotions about the program. Emily indicated that filming of Season 1 is scheduled for September 2020.

Emily showed a clip from “Flip My Florida Yard.”

Local Government Program Updates

Seminole County Update

Marie Lackey provided an update on Seminole County activities. The county is using WKMZ to produce public service announcements (PSAs) about slow release nitrogen and, now, summer fertilizer blends. Marie showed an example of the PSAs. She noted the PSAs were funded through a DEP education grant. The PSAs are available on the county’s fertilizer webpage. Marie indicated that the county budgets have been cut back due to Covid-19. Feedback on the PSAs is welcome. Marie is working on a grant project working with the retail industry. Mary offered to share the links to the Seminole County fertilizer PSAs (Seminole’s fertilizer site at <http://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/departments-services/public-works/watershed-management/fertilizer-ordinance/>).

Orange County Update

Julie Bortles showed a campaign summary and materials. There are posters, videos, billboards, and reminder cards. Social media will be rolled out as well. The materials are undergoing a review by the commission and after a two-week survey, the materials will roll out.

City of Tallahassee Update

Courtney Schoen noted that a leaf and grass clippings awareness cartoon PSA has been created. Tally also added more information on their website about the proper disposal of leaf and grass clippings. There is an ordinance about proper disposal already. The feedback has included some suggestions on having an ordinance but there is one. The metrics aren’t back yet. Because of Covid-19, there hasn’t been a chance to get as much public feedback. Tallahassee will run the leaf PSA in the fall/winter. Moira, a Tallahassee resident, noted that she is seeing the PSAs a lot on social media. Courtney added that the radio and billboards are out and running. At www.TAPPwater.org the Tallahassee PSAs are posted; Mary will provide a link to the participants. Courtney noted that Collier County translated the city’s rubber duck add into Spanish and is showing it in southwest Florida.

Volusia County Update

Katrina Locke gave an update on Volusia County’s activities. The county worked on the “Be Floridian Now” program to create a newsletter countywide. They worked with the Marine Resources Council. Megan Martin has been working with other partners with Stetson University, Audubon, and Jennifer Mitchell by providing information to them through a community managers webinar. The webinar was well-attended (60 people). An in-person meeting was held last year, with lunch provided. This year it was held online. The county hopes to hold more

information sessions as they move forward. Megan is working with an HOA in DeLand and surveying community members in terms of what they are doing, who is doing the maintenance, and working with Stetson on landscapers and fertilizer retailers.

Katrina added that Volusia County has a \$319 grant that is on hold because an in-person LID session was planned on Volusia Blue Springs. In relation to this effort, the county has held one academy, but they are looking to have more webinar-based workshops. Additionally, they are working in a social marketing campaign about residential fertilizer. They have needed to make some adjustments to the PSA, because the original version showed a lot of people together (without social distancing). Within the next few weeks, the revised PSA should be ready to air. They are working with the communities in western Volusia County. More information is being added to their website on septic systems and information about those. There are a series of presentations for the webinar. It moves through the levels of educational pieces that build on each other. They will be recorded for people to watch on their own time. They are also looking at Green Infrastructure. Megan will share the newsletter and survey results with everyone.

Next Steps

Mary will provide the notes from the meeting and any links or materials as they become available. Mary asked if these meetings are helpful; there was general assent. Mary noted that she continues to try and engage the Florida Park Service. Mary suggested that October 2020 would be a good timeframe to meet again and DEP will have some activities to report by that time.

Mary asked if the virtual meeting forum was valuable. The general response was yes. Mary has draft notes and flip chart information from the session in November 2019 that Mary will make available.

Maira noted that DEP wants the sessions to be valuable for everyone to have the opportunity to share materials. There is no news about the challenged springs basin management action plans (BMAPs) from the legal process. Maira and Tiffany noted the 2019 Statewide Annual Report will be posted by July 1st as well as individual Springs BMAP Story Maps (for those that are adopted and not legally challenged).

Adjourn

The meeting ended at 11:29 am.

Action Items

1. Eban will reach out to Mary to seek some review of the draft ordinance guidance from this group. Completed.
2. Emily will share the “Flip My Florida Yard” airing schedule when she receives it. Completed.
3. Mary offered to share the links to the Seminole County fertilizer PSAs (Seminole’s fertilizer site at <http://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/departments-services/public-works/watershed-management/fertilizer-ordinance/>).
4. At www.TAPPwater.org the Tallahassee PSAs are posted; Mary will provide a link to the participants: <http://tappwater.org/media/videos.cfm>.

5. Megan will share the Volusia County newsletter and survey results with everyone.
6. Everyone should plan to meet again in October 2020; the session may be virtual.
7. Mary will make available the draft notes and flip chart materials from the LID discussion in November 2019. Completed.