

Alachua County Fertilizer Ordinance and Social Marketing Campaign

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Alachua County Landscaping Strategies

- **Education-** Shifting Landscaping Paradigm
 - Social media marketing
 - Television commercials and billboards
 - Turf SWAP Rebate Program
- **Regulatory-** Reducing Irrigation and Fertilizer Use
 - Irrigation Efficiency Design Code
 - Irrigation Restrictions
 - Fertilizer Code
 - HOA FFL Code





FDEP 319 Public Education Grant

- \$135,000 from 2018 – 2021
- Design, Implement, and Evaluation a social marketing behavior campaign to reduce landscape fertilizer use
- Calculate load reductions based on results of campaign



Alachua County Fertilizer Code 2019 Amendments

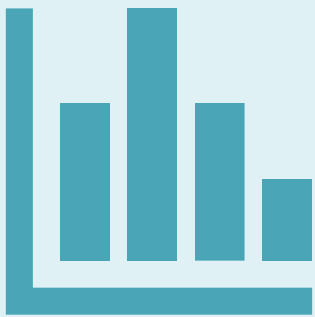
(Chapter 77 Article 4)

- Fertilizer with phosphorus is only allowed if a soil or tissue test verifies a need
- Fertilizer with nitrogen is only allowed March – June and must have at least 50% slow-release nitrogen



What is Social Marketing?

Research-based marketing campaign developed to change behaviors to benefit the greater social or environmental good.





General Steps of Social Marketing

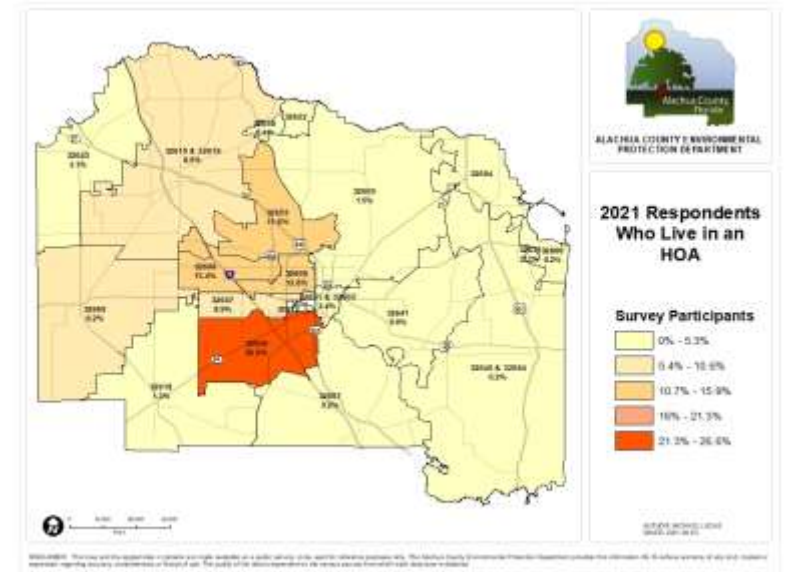
1. Segment Target Audience(s)
2. Select a Behavior (Impact/Probability)
3. Use Research to Identify Barriers and Benefits
4. Develop a Strategy Using Tools of Behavior Change
(Incentives, Prompts, Commitments, Norms)
5. Evaluate

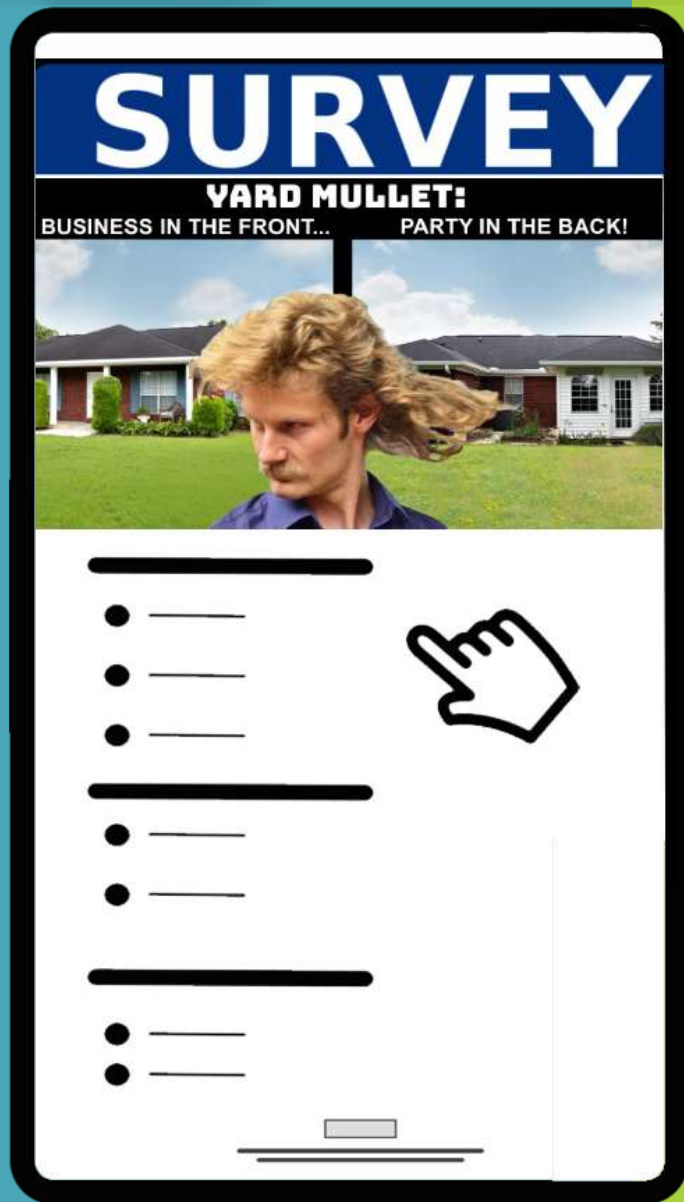




1. Segment Target Audience(s)

- There is no “general public”
- 55% said they don’t use fertilizer – so why spend money on them?
 - Use Fertilizer
 - Residents who hire a Landscape company to apply
 - DIY Fertilizer Users
 - Live in an HOA





Steps of Social Marketing ↗

2. Select Specific Behavior

Reduce Fertilizer Use? NO!

- Most people think they are environmentally friendly as it is. They may not see room for improvement.
- **Fertilizer Users**
 - Skip the Fertilizer this Year!
 - Join the 55% that say they don't use fertilizer.
- **Live in an HOA**
 - Don't Use Fertilizer in the Backyard



Steps of Social Marketing ↗

3. Identify Barriers and Benefits

What would encourage you to reduce your fertilizer use?

- 69% Still Look Great
- **57% Harm the Environment**
- **52% Harms the Springs**
- 49% Harms My Pets
- 46% Harms My Children
- **37% Illegal/Banned**
- 22% If Mixed Grass Were More Socially Acceptable
- 21% If I Didn't Have an HOA

- **Knowledge was a barrier**
 - Around half of fertilizer users thought residential fertilizer could cause algal blooms in nearby waterbodies (53%).





Steps of Social Marketing ↗

4. Develop Strategy Using Tools of Change

- **Norms**
 - Position desired behavior as the norm, not the exception.
 - Join the 55%!



**ARE
YOU
ONE
OF THE
55?**

55% of residents surveyed said they don't use fertilizer at all. Thank you!

MyYardOurWater.org





Steps of Social Marketing ↗

4. Develop Strategy Using Tools of Change

- Incentives (Highlight the benefits)
 - Healthier springs
 - Healthier groundwater (drinking water)
 - Your yard can still look great!
 - Future generations



My Yard Our Water

Published by Dorian Morgan · February 26 ·

Fertilizer can wash off our yards and seep into our creeks, springs, rivers, and even the aquifer - our drinking water source. Join the 55% that say they don't use fertilizer and skip the fertilizer this year.

#myyardourwater #itsallconnected #jointhe55 #fertilizerfree #springs



ALACHUACOUNTY.US

Skip the Fertilizer!

[Learn More](#)



Steps of Social Marketing ↗

4. Develop Strategy Using Tools of Change

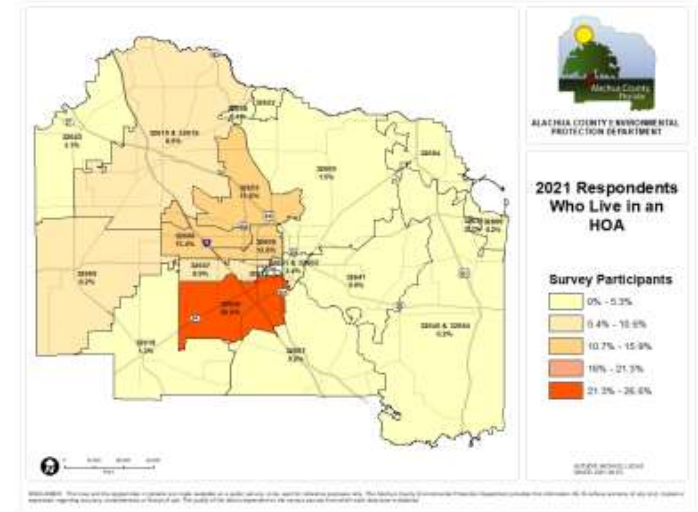
- Prompts (Signage, T-shirts, Stickers)





Fertilizer Campaign- Social Media

“Over half of Alachua County residents (55%) say they don't use fertilizer at all. Thank you! For those that are still using fertilizer, would you pledge to skip the fertilizer at least in the backyard this year? Backyards are for belly laughs and rolling in the grass, not fertilizer. “





Fertilizer Campaign- Social Media

“Fertilizer washes off our yards and can seep into our waterways and contribute to algae blooms which block sunlight and choke out aquatic plants and fish. Over half of Alachua County residents (55%) say they don't use fertilizer at all. Thank you!”





Fertilizer Campaign- Social Media

“Okay, we know it doesn’t “really” work exactly like this, but fertilizer can push past grass roots and end up in the groundwater - our drinking water. And fertilizer can wash right off your yard as stormwater pollution into our lakes, river, creeks and springs. Especially if you fertilize before a rain! Just some of the reasons fertilizer is now banned from July through February in @AlachuaCounty”



Gilchrist Blue Springs, 2018



Gilchrist Blue Springs, 2020





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Gainesville Magazine & Gainesville Sun – 22 ads March - November

BACKYARDS ARE FOR BERRIES AND BELLY LAUGHS (NOT FERTILIZER).



Over half of Alachua County residents (55%) don't use fertilizer at all. THANK YOU! For those that are still using fertilizer, would you pledge to skip the fertilizer at least in the backyard this year? Backyards are for belly laughs and rolling in the grass, not fertilizer! #jointhe55

Learn more at MyYardOurWater.org.



What starts here, can end up here.

**NEW BAN ON FERTILIZER
JULY - FEBRUARY**

Fertilizer washes off our yards and seeps into our waterways and the aquifer (our drinking water source!). Most Alachua County residents (55%) say they don't use fertilizer at all. Thank you! Join the 55% and skip the fertilizer this year. Your yard can still look great and our waterways will thank you.

Learn more at MyYardOurWater.org

"Most Alachua County residents (55%) say they don't use fertilizer at all year-round."



In Florida, we are surrounded by water, even under our feet in the aquifer. The water that comes out of your tap for drinking and other household uses comes from our underground aquifer (also called groundwater). Regardless of where you live in Florida, you likely live close to an "impaired" waterway. Nitrogen and/or phosphorus from yards, farms, and septic systems are the most common sources of pollution. Here in Alachua County, we contribute to the nutrient pollution on the Santa Fe River and its springs, Lake Santa Fe, the Silver River, and the Orange Creek Basin (Hogtown Creek and its tributaries, Sweetwater Branch, Tumblin Creek, Paynes Prairie, Newnans, Orange and Lochloosa lakes).



Over-manicured yards are particularly hard on our waterways. Irrigation depletes groundwater supplies, while fertilizers contribute to nutrient pollution and algal outbreaks. Irrigation and heavy rain can push nutrients from landscape fertilizers past plant roots and into the groundwater or can wash fertilizer off as stormwater into our surface waters (creeks, lakes, rivers, etc.). Rainfall is the greatest during summer, so fertilizing during these months has a high potential to pollute waterways. Additionally plants don't need as many nutrients in the cooler months. When we fertilize in the winter, polluting nutrients can move past the root zone and into our drinking water and springs.

For these reasons, fertilizer containing nitrogen is banned in Alachua County from July through February. Most Alachua County residents (55%) say they don't use fertilizer at all year-round. Thank you! Join the 55% and skip the fertilizer this year. See what happens. Even if you live in an HOA, your yard can still look great if you cut back or eliminate the fertilizer.

Remember, having a nice yard is, well, nice. But having clean water to drink, swim in, and for the future is pretty important. We can have it all! We may have to shift our expectations a bit and let go of the bright green monoculture carpet look year-round. It is normal for grass to turn a little yellow or brown in the winter and during droughts. Having a few weeds or multiple species in your yard does not make you a bad neighbor, it actually makes you a good neighbor to our springs and pollinators! Our beloved animals, our kids and our springs will benefit if you don't use fertilizer. **Join the 55% today and skip the fertilizer!**

Learn more from the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department at MyYardOurWater.org.





GRU Partnership Mailer - 70,000!

What starts on our lawns, can end up in our springs.

MyYardOurWater.org

Over half of Alachua County residents (55%) say they don't use fertilizers at all. Fertilizer can leach into our groundwater and wash off into our creeks, rivers, lakes and springs causing algae growth that harms wildlife and water quality. For these reasons, fertilizers are banned in Alachua County from July through February. If you use fertilizer during non-banned months, it must contain at least 50% slow release nitrogen and 0% phosphorous (the middle number on the bag must be zero). Or, try to skip the fertilizer this year entirely. Your yard can still look great and our water resources will thank you!

GRU
More than Energy



ALACHUA COUNTY SOCIAL MARKETING





ALACHUA COUNTY SOCIAL MARKETING





Steps of Social Marketing ↗

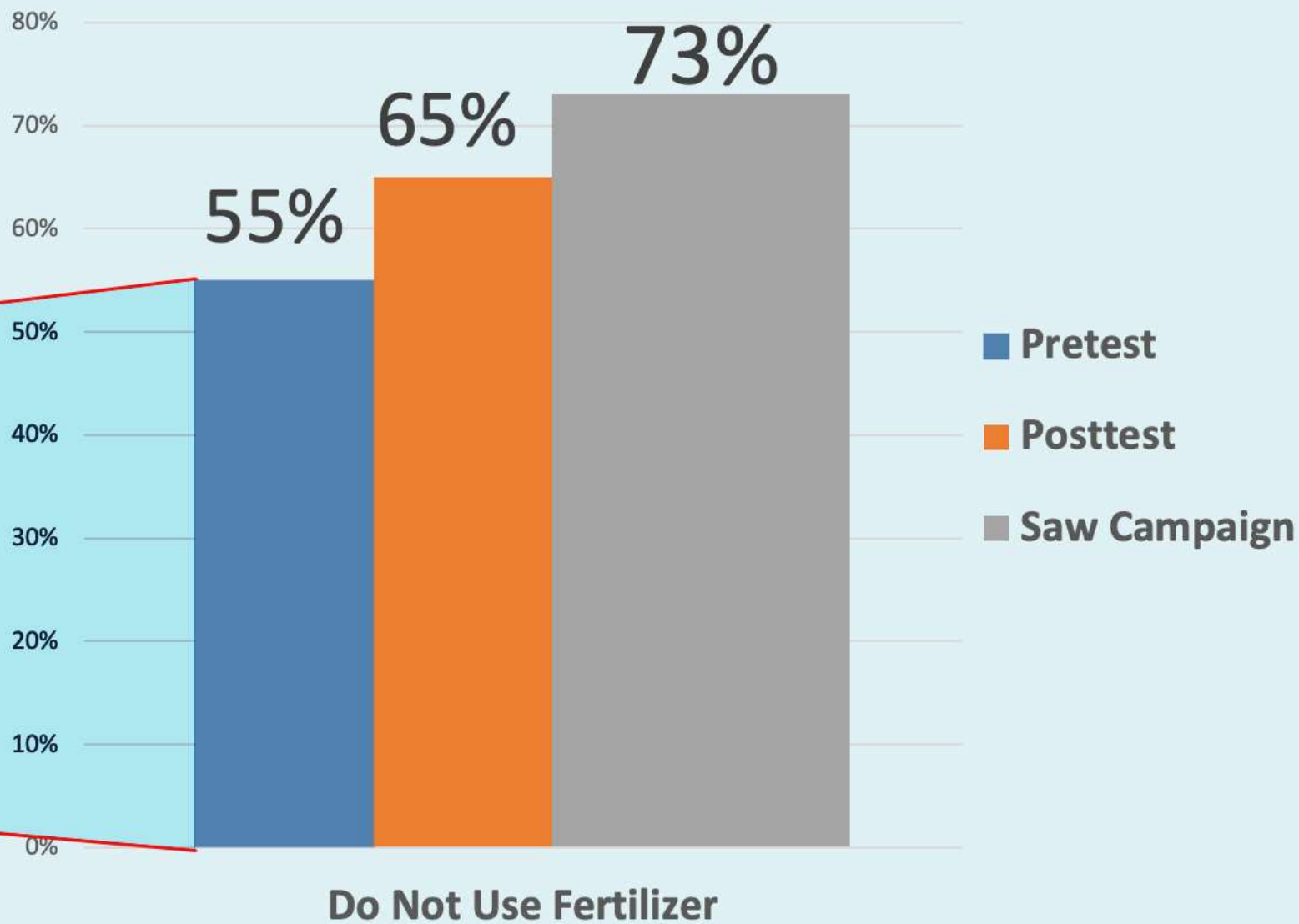
5. Evaluate the Strategy

- Pretest Survey 2018/2019 n= 1,118
- Posttest Survey 2020/2021 n= 2,297





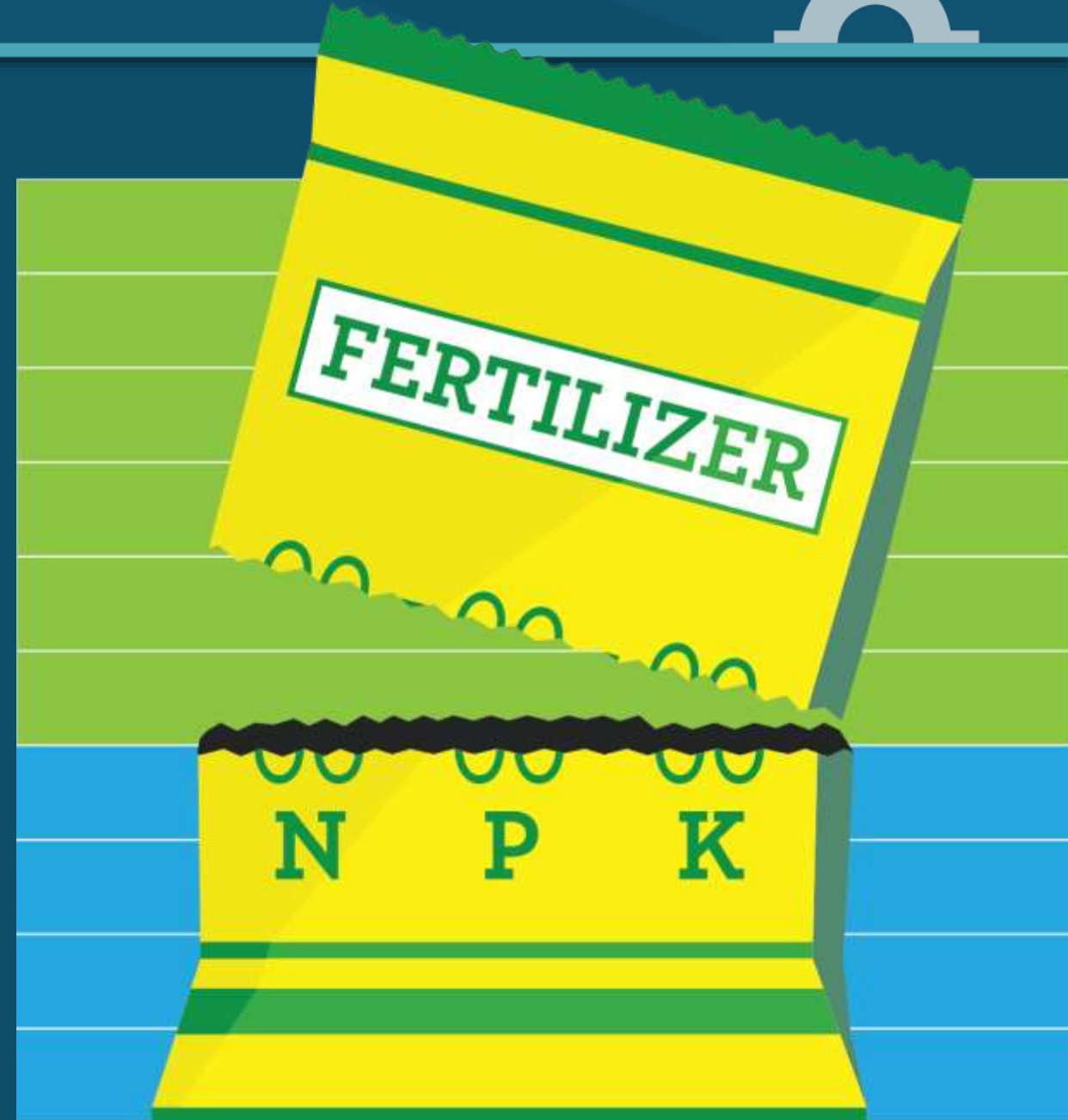
ALACHUA COUNTY SOCIAL MARKETING





40%

of respondents who use
fertilizer said they
decided to use less
fertilizer as a result of
seeing the campaign





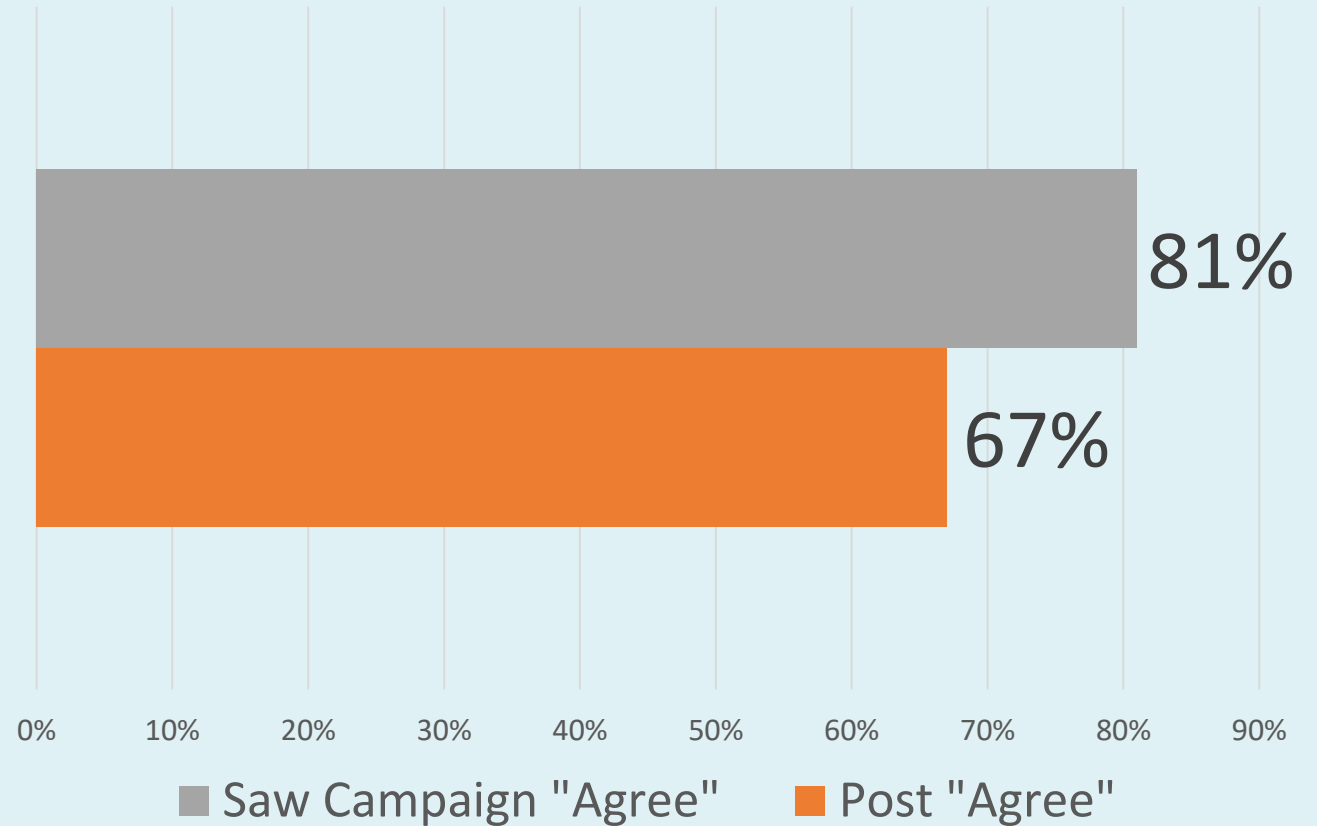
81%

who saw the campaign
agreed that fertilizers
negatively impact the
environment.

67%

who did not see
campaign agreed.

Fertilizers Negatively Impact the Environment

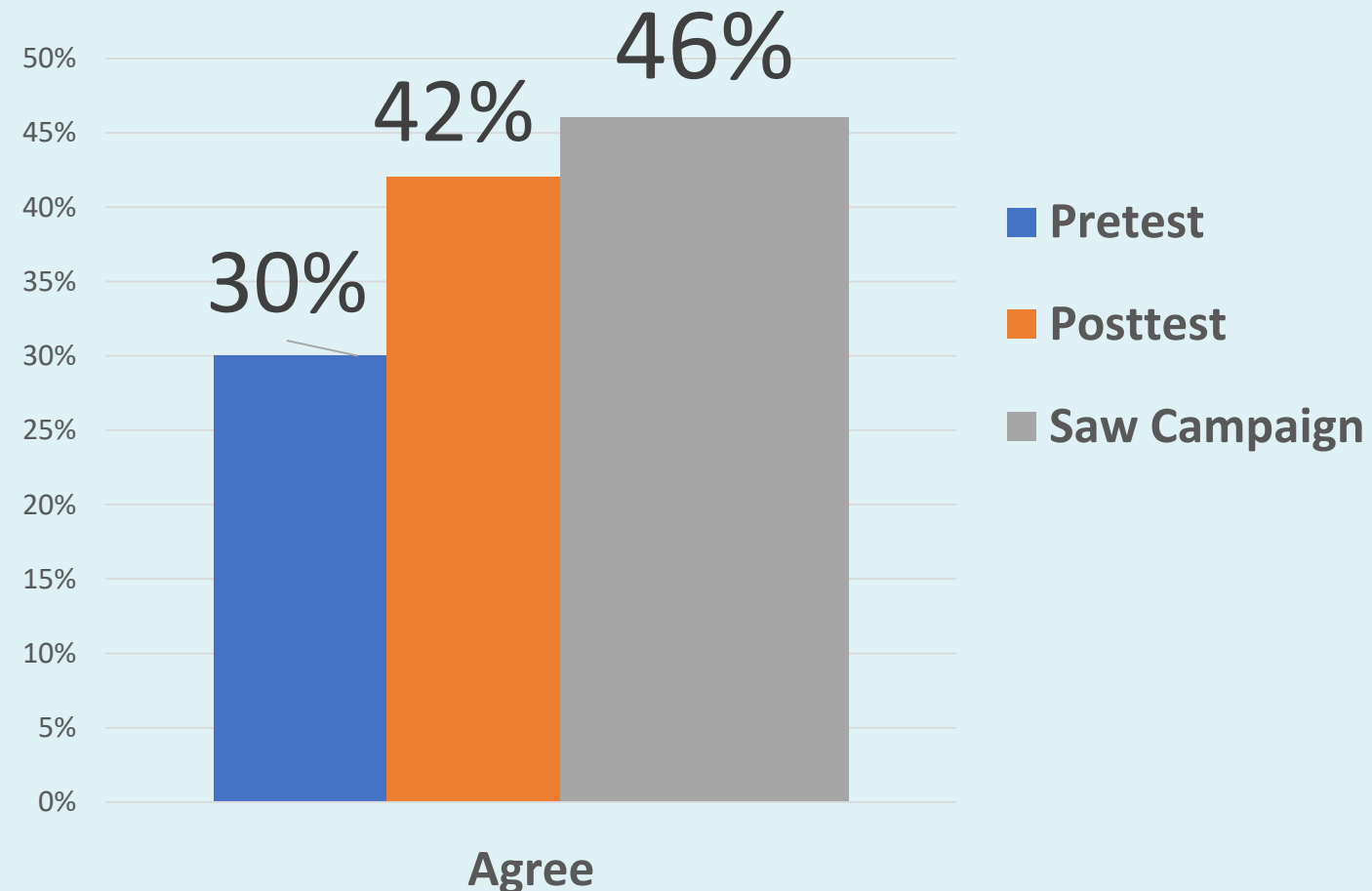




40%

increase between pre
and post in agreement
“Fertilizers from
residential lawns”...
cause algae blooms.

Fertilizers from Residential Yards Cause Algae Blooms





- Load Reduction Results

- Wood combined survey, spatial, and literature data with fertilizer label information to estimate nitrogen load reductions
 - Simple Model used for surface water
 - Nitrogen Source Inventory Loading Tool (NSILT) used for groundwater
- 20% reduction in annual nitrogen loading from ~70,000 acres of medium and low density residential land uses to reduce loading by:
 - 8,000 pounds for surface water and
 - 12,000 pounds for groundwater



Thank You!

- **Funding for these projects includes:**
 - Gainesville Clean Water Partnership (Alachua County, City of Gainesville, FDOT)
 - Alachua County
 - Florida Department of Environmental Protection
 - US Environmental Protection Agency
 - St. Johns and Suwannee River Water Management Districts



Questions?



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