



Thursday, June 2, 2011

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## Fertilizer ban begins in Pinellas County, City of Tampa considers same

Nitrogen in fertilizer sparks summer ban

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Posted: 05/31/2011



By: Jeff Butera



TAMPA - The ban on retailers selling fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorous begins Wednesday in Pinellas County. It will run through September, encompassing what is generally referred to as the 'rainy season.'

The intent of the ban is to protect the area's water. Proponents, like Phil Compton with the Sierra Club, say the nitrogen in the fertilizer is often washed away during thunderstorms typical during the summer months.

The nitrogen then runs off into rivers or the bay, creating an algae bloom. The nitrogen clouds the water, kills fish and adversely affects plant life.

A ban on the fertilizer containing nitrogen would protect the water and also ease up on the cost to the taxpayer of getting the nitrogen out of the water.

Homeowners are also not allowed to use the fertilizer with nitrogen during those months, and could face a fine if they are caught doing so.

On Thursday, the Tampa City Council will decide if they too want to have a ban on that type of fertilizer during the summer months.

They hope to make their decision before July 1, when the state takes over responsibility for deciding how fertilizer is sold. A city can still pass their own city-specific ordinance prior to July 1.

Joe Welch with Massey Services, a full-service lawn care and pest control service, does not support the ban.

He argues science has shown the best way to ensure healthy water is to also have healthy, green grass. He says healthy, green grass -- achieved through using fertilizer with nitrogen -- is most likely to absorb the nitrogen, and not allow it to run-off into the water.

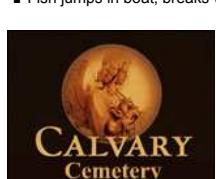
He considers a ban counter-productive and a bad thing for both the health of the grass and the water.

The Tampa City Council meeting begins at 9 a.m. on Thursday morning.

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