



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
JOHN PEYTON
MAYOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAYOR SIGNS FERTILIZER AND IRRIGATION BILLS *Mayor, Council Members and Environmental Leaders Join in Signing Ceremony and Demonstration*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. July 23, 2008— Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton was today joined by City Council President Ronnie Fussell, City Council Member Michael Corrigan and St. Johns Riverkeeper executive director Neil Armingeon as he signed two bills approved by the Jacksonville City Council designed to conserve Jacksonville's water supply and reduce the amount of nutrients flowing into the St. Johns River.

"This is an important day for Jacksonville and the St. Johns River, as we take this important step to restore the health of our greatest natural treasure," said Peyton. "This action will require that, as a community, we implement fertilizer and landscape maintenance best practices and irrigation conservation measures to prevent further damage to our fragile river; and that we take a common sense approach to irrigation in order to conserve our precious water supply."

On Tuesday night, the Jacksonville City Council passed two pieces of legislation impacting Chapter 366 of the ordinance code (Groundwater Resource Management). The fertilizer ordinance will require the implementation of best management practices for retail garden centers, commercial fertilizer applicators and residents. A second bill will place restrictions on lawn watering for residential, commercial and government properties.

"Although every citizen cannot see the St. Johns River from where they live or work, we all have a vested interest in insuring the long term health of our most precious natural resource," said district 14 Council Member Corrigan. "The passage of the lawn fertilization and water restriction regulations last night is a great step toward protecting the river."

"With the passage of these two ordinances, Jacksonville has sent a message that our community is ready and willing to do what it takes to reduce the use of fertilizers and decrease our water consumption in order to protect our greatest natural resource, the St. Johns River," said Armingeon.

The irrigation ordinance (2008-030) enacts landscape irrigation conservation measures or requirements that are based upon the St. Johns River Water Management District's model ordinance. The landscape irrigation requirements provide for odd/even addresses to irrigate on scheduled days, and prohibit irrigation between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Exceptions under certain circumstances are allowed (such as using a hand-held irrigation tool, micro-irrigation systems, maintenance and repair or watering to establish new landscaping). The irrigation conservation requirements may be enforced by the Environmental and Compliance Department, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, or any state law enforcement officer.

To assist in meeting the nutrient total maximum daily load (TMDL) requirements for the St. Johns River as set forth for the City of Jacksonville by the Clean Water Act, the fertilizer ordinance (2008-028) addresses fertilizer application and retail storage requirements for retail garden centers, commercial fertilizer applicators and homeowners.

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Excessive levels of nutrients result in harmful algal blooms that, in turn, directly impact the health, use and enjoyment of the river and its tributaries. Fertilizers are one source of the nutrients discharged into surface water bodies, so the legislation will help to prevent excess nutrients from reaching waterways and stormwater systems, helping the city to achieve its TMDL allocation more in a more cost-effective manner.

Retail facilities that sell fertilizer will be encouraged to have their staff trained in best management practices (BMPs) to assist in educating consumers. In addition, the retail facilities will be required to manage the storage of fertilizer in accordance with appropriate BMPs.

Commercial fertilizer applicators will also undergo training in BMPs covering topics such as environmental issues and protections, plant selection and care, irrigation, fertilization, safety and spill cleanup techniques. Residents will be required to phase in at least a six-foot zone of landscaping or ground cover on their property adjacent to water bodies that does not require intensive fertilizer, watering or mowing.

Florida Yards and Neighborhoods, a University of Florida Extension program, partners with national, state and local agencies to teach Florida-friendly landscaping. The program provides educational outreach opportunities to homeowners, landscaping professionals, builders and developers on low maintenance plants and environmentally sustainable practices to enhance landscapes while saving money, time and energy. To learn more or register visit <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/> or call (904) 387-8850.

Following the signing of the legislation, Mike Sweat, Duval County Extension, acting county director and Evie Pankok, Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, program assistant, provided a demonstration on landscape best management practices.

Other methods of public outreach and education regarding watering and fertilizing will also be implemented, including printed collateral and Web site updates.

The implementation of fertilizer and irrigation regulations and best practices is just one part of a comprehensive approach to improving the health of the St. Johns. Work is underway to remove failing septic tanks in Duval County. The Jacksonville Stormwater Utility is a dedicated funding source for reducing the amount of rainwater that flows into the river after storms. Efforts to minimize sedimentation, more efficiently treat wastewater and increase public access to the river are also in progress.

To review the legislation in full, visit www.coj.net, City Council page, Legislative Bill Search and enter the bill numbers.

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