For immediate release: May 22, 2012

Martin County’s fertilizer ban takes effect June 1

An ordinance regulating the use of fertilizer in unincorporated Martin County will be in effect from June 1-September 30. It aims to reduce the amount of harmful nutrients entering local water bodies, a crucial step towards improving and maintaining water and habitat quality. Fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus cannot be used on turf, sod, lawns or landscape plants during the period of the ban, which extends during the four-month rainy season.

The ordinance was approved last year by the Martin County Board of County Commissioners as part of their ongoing effort to improve water quality in Martin County’s coastal areas. Martin County is among a growing number of local governments with similar regulations.

The ordinance applies to anyone - personal or professional - landscaping in unincorporated Martin County. It does provide exemptions for agriculture, golf courses, and specialized turf, such as athletic fields.

The ordinance requires the registration and training of both professional landscapers and institutional landscapers, and sets best-management landscape and fertilizer practices. Training for landscapers will be provided through the University of Florida Martin County Extension Service.

For the remainder of the year, fertilizer containing phosphorus and nitrogen is limited. Fertilizer use is also prohibited within 10 feet of water bodies, including wetlands, and seawalls. And, if you use a fertilizer spreader, you are required to have a deflector shield to prevent nutrient spread into water body buffers and impervious surfaces. Vegetative material, including grass clippings, cannot be washed, swept, or blown into stormwater flow-ways, waterbodies or impervious areas.

By January 1, 2013, all commercial and institutional applicators within the unincorporated area of Martin County are required to successfully complete training and continuing education requirements.

Questions regarding the adopted ordinance can be directed to the University of Florida’s Martin County Extension Office at 772-288-5654.

To check to see if your property is in unincorporated Martin County, click the following link and insert your property information: http://geoweb.martin.fl.us/info/
The adopted ordinance can be viewed in its entirety at Martin County home.

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