



Latino Environmental Education Network Newsletter

Spring 2009

Volume III, Issue 2

Did you know?

- Latinos make up 25% of Collier County and 15% of Lee County's population.
- Immigrant Latinos come from countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America
- The mission of the Latino Environmental Education Network is to target environmental education efforts to an audience that has not been reached by traditional programs.

In this issue:

An Environmental Education Meeting for Latinos.	1
Why E-Cycle?	2
Managing Household Hazardous Waste.	2
Pharmaceutical contamination in natural waters.	3
Be Careful with Yard Waste!	3
Reduce and Reuse: Go Green and Save Money.	4
Mark Your Calendar.	4
Contact Information.	4

An Environmental Education Meeting for Latinos Update *By Joy Hazell*

The Latino Environmental Education Network (LEEN) promotes environmental, community and economic well-being by working to improve environmental education and literacy opportunities available to Latino communities in Southwest Florida.

To further our efforts, LEEN has been holding workshops to identify Latino community leaders as future partners, to determine the educational interests of workshop participants, to connect workshop participants with informational resources, and to improve existing educational outreach strategies. The meetings include brief presentations followed by smaller group discussions that provide an opportunity for participants to share ideas about expanding environmental outreach and educational opportunities to Latino populations.



To date, LEEN has held workshops in Fort Myers and Arcadia which included presentations about protecting Florida's habitats and wildlife, conserving water resources and saving water and energy at home. Workshop participants also discussed the following questions:

- What are the key environmental issues in Southwest Florida for Hispanic citizens?
- What are the perceived barriers preventing Hispanic citizens from attending environmental programming and/or activities?
- What are the most effective means/strategies of engaging more Hispanic citizens in environmental programming/activities?
- What community organizations or events would better engage Hispanics in environmental issues?

What did we learn? One key issue identified was what to do about waste. As a result, LEEN has decided to focus this issue of the newsletter on the topic of waste reduction. We hope you enjoy it!

And don't forget that upcoming community workshops will be held in Immokalee, Florida in Spring 2009.

Please join LEEN for a Community Workshop at one of the following locations:

Date	City	Location
May 9	Immokalee	Career and Service Center 750 South 5th St., Immokalee



Why E-Cycle? *By Bryan Fluech*

Electronic devices such as cell phones, computers, televisions, and video games are a routine part of our daily lives. A 2008 Consumer Electronics Association report indicates Americans own approximately 24 electronic devices per household, and when newer versions of these products arrive on the market we often purchase them as well. The result is an ever-growing accumulation of used or outdated electronic devices, known as e-waste. In many cases old electronics can be reused or refurbished so that others can benefit from the technology. However, if this is not practical, used electronics should be recycled.



Electronic devices are made up of raw materials including precious metals, copper, and engineered plastics that require considerable energy to process and manufacture. Recycling or “e-cycling” electronics therefore helps to conserve natural resources and reduce air and water pollution. “E-cycling” also reduces greenhouse gas emissions produced when manufacturing new products. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Recycling 1 million desktop computers prevents the release of greenhouse gases equivalent to the annual emissions of over 17,000 passenger cars
- Recycling 1 million cell phones saves enough energy to power more than 19,000 US households with electricity for an entire year.”

Recycling electronics keeps dangerous waste from entering local landfills. Recycling also prevents toxic substances such as mercury, lead, chromium, and cadmium, which are often found in everyday electronic devices, from contaminating the environment. To learn more about “e-cycling”, contact your local solid waste department. Most counties will accept used electronics as part of their normal recycling pick-up process, but may require you to contact them ahead of time. More helpful information about e-waste and e-cycling can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/materials/ecycling/index.htm>.

Managing Household Hazardous Waste *By Bridget Washburn*

Do you change your own motor oil or work with paint at home? If so, proceed with care. Your health and safety depend on it. If not properly disposed of, the contents from a single oil change can contaminate 1 million gallons of water, or a years' supply for 50 people!

Motor oil and even some paints are slow to break down and may contain potentially toxic substances, such as lead, benzene, zinc or magnesium. When these substances leak onto streets or are dumped down drains, they often wash into streams and rivers that lead to public water supplies or the Gulf of Mexico – where they can impact human health and marine life.

To avoid the potential risks associated with motor oil and other potentially hazardous household wastes such as paint, it is important to monitor their use, storage, and disposal. Keep these substances in their original containers and never remove labels. It is best to completely use oil and paint purchased, but if leftovers remain, never mix two different substances. Remember to follow disposal instructions provided on product labels, and never dump liquid wastes down the sink, toilet or storm drains.



Recycling is the best option for used motor oil. In fact, two gallons of used motor oil can generate enough electricity to power the average home for one day, or cook 48 meals in a microwave oven (earth911.com)!

Help protect community drinking water, local waterways, and marine life. Call your local environmental, health, or solid waste agency to learn more about proper use and disposal of hazardous waste, and upcoming collection days, or visit www.epa.gov for more information.



Pharmaceutical contamination in natural waters *By Ernesto Lasso de la Vega*

It should not be a surprise to learn that our natural waters have been contaminated with pharmaceutical drugs and other chemicals designed for human consumption. Some chemicals, including caffeine, ibuprofen and nicotine have been found in our waste waters since the 1970s. In the last decade, new technologies have improved our ability to identify and analyze additional chemicals used by people, such as hormones, antibiotics and antidepressants. These chemicals typically enter local waters after the user takes the medicine and some of the water soluble chemicals are passed through the body. Other chemicals find their way to waste water treatment plants when people dispose of unwanted medication down the toilet. Most septic tanks or water treatment plants do not process these molecules, and they eventually end up in the rivers, estuaries or oceans. Alarming evidence has been found that relates abnormal behavior or reproductive failure of fish and other aquatic organisms to the presence of some of these drugs. To minimize this type of pollution, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has published a Homeowner's Guide to Disposal of Unwanted Medications. This document emphasizes not to flush unwanted drugs down the toilet. Instead, find the proper mechanism of disposal suitable in your local community. This may require proper disposal of medications in the landfill or the recycling center. For more information, please visit the following link:



http://www.dep.state.fl.us/waste/quick_topics/publications/shw/meds/DEPMedicationDisposalFlyer.pdf

Be careful with yard waste! *By Alberto Chavez*

Landscaping waste is comprised of all kinds of plant matter generated by landscaping maintenance; this includes leaves, grass clippings, trimmings and whole plants. It is very important to properly dispose of landscaping waste. No matter how big or small the debris is, improper disposal can cause water pollution and the propagation of invasive plants.

If not discarded properly you can spread pests and diseases, and plants and plant trimmings may establish in unwanted areas. Two good examples are Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) and Melaleuca, which were introduced from other continents to Florida. These species have quickly taken over vast areas and are almost impossible to eradicate. Invasive plant removal and habitat restoration can be complicated and costly operations.

Correctly timed maintenance activities can reduce the propagation of unwanted plants. For instance, prune plants before their fruit is mature, and rake leaves before the seeds of surrounding plants have dropped.

Never sweep or blow grass clippings, leaves, or other debris into a stormwater drain. This type of waste contains nutrients that pollute local waterways and the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, they can clog the stormwater system and cause flooding.

Many experts suggest that the best practice to manage landscaping waste is to keep it in the yard or garden where it was generated. Composting and producing mulch on site are two effective ways to reuse waste and prevent the dissemination of undesired plants, pests and diseases, and pollution of water bodies. Reusing landscaping waste may also greatly reduce transportation, disposal and material costs.

Keep in mind that most of the counties and cities in Florida have specific regulations on how to discard plant material. To find out how to dispose of landscaping waste, contact your county waste management utility or your local Extension Office.



REDUCE & REUSE!!! Go Green and Save Money, By Martha Avila

If you are looking to save money, start thinking green in your daily routine – it can add up to a big difference for the planet and your wallet.

First, re-use. Reuse is simply the act of finding a second (or third, or tenth or hundredth) use for a product to prolong its life. Many of us already implement “re-use” in our everyday lives without realizing it. Any time you buy or sell a product second-hand from vendors like eBay, Craigslist or Goodwill, you are providing an additional use for this product and are not requiring another product to be created.

Here are some ideas you can implement to help the environment and save money:

Toss the paper napkins and go cloth. Paper napkins are not cheap and a nice wicker basket filled with cloth napkins of all different colors and designs is a nice addition to any dinner table.

Find new uses for old towels. Instead of buying new washcloths, hand towels, tea towels or dishrags, cut your old, thin and ragged bath towels into hand towels and dish towel-sized pieces.

Enjoy old scraps of soap. Put old soap in an onion or orange plastic mesh bag, or an old piece of pantyhose or sock. After tying a knot in both ends, use the bound soap as an exfoliating body scrubber.

Collect and reuse rainwater. Gather and contain water from your roof and water your plants and yard instead of turning on the hose.

Use less stuff: Re-think some of your habits. Take, for example, paper. You don't always need a fresh sheet. If you're writing a grocery list, grab a junk- mail envelope and scribble on a blank section. When you do use a whole sheet of paper, use both sides of each page. Also, take advantage of occasions to skip paper entirely. Don't automatically hit the print button on your computer, and send out party invitations by e-mail. Just think of how much paper, postage and effort you'll save.



Mark Your Calendar

May 2nd. Dive Into Oceans Family Day Event at Rookery Bay. NERR. <http://www.rookerybay.org/>

May 6th, Collier County Extension Service: Landscaping 101 Course. <http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu/>

June 22-26. Collier County Youth Fishing Camp. For more information contact, Bryan Fluech.

Ongoing, Nine Principles of a Florida Friendly Yard, Sponsored by Florida Yards and Neighborhoods, Contact 239-533-7523

More Information:

Sea Grant Collier County
Bryan Fluech
 239-417-6310 x204
fluech@ufl.edu

Sustainability Program Lee County
Martha Avila
 239-533-7506
avilamc@leegov.com

Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program
Ernesto Lasso de la Vega
 (239) 851-1582
elasso@edison.edu

Sea Grant Lee County
Joy Hazell
 239-533-7518
hazellje@leegov.com

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Alberto Chavez
 239-417-6310 x231
alberto.chavez@dep.state.fl.us

Gulf of Mexico Alliance
Bridget Washburn
 239-417-6310 x 229
Bridget.washburn@dep.state.fl.us