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Indian River Shores adopts stricter fertilizer ordinance

By Janet Begley

Posted December 14, 2013 at 1:18 a.m.

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INDIAN RIVER SHORES — It's three down and three to go, according to lagoon advocate Judy Orcutt, who was on hand Friday morning when the Indian River Shores Town Council voted unanimously to strengthen its fertilizer ordinance.

The new ordinance, which mirrors ones recently passed by Indian River County and Vero Beach, calls for a summer blackout period when lawn fertilizer cannot be applied from June through September.

Other provisions include conducting a soil test before phosphorus can be applied and the exclusive use of fertilizers that contain at least 50 percent slow release nitrogen.

Orcutt, who has attended almost every meeting supporting stronger fertilizer ordinances throughout the county, said she was pleased the Indian River Shores Council took such a positive step to improve the water quality of the Indian River Lagoon.

With Indian River Shores' decision Friday, Orcutt said she will now turn her attention to Orchid, Fellsmere and Sebastian, three local municipalities who have not yet voted to strengthen their fertilizer ordinances.

And Orcutt may not have to wait long. Orchid Town Manager Deb Branwell said her town council will consider the measure when they meet on Jan. 9.



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"The Town Council adopted the 'Florida Friendly' version before but will discuss adopting the same ordinance the county adopted in order to create continuity among the jurisdictions," Branwell wrote in an email.

The county's ordinance is stricter than the state's because it sets a definite start and stop time for when fertilizer can be applied and calls for slow-release nitrogen.

Fellsmere City Manager Jason Nunemaker said his council adopted the model ordinance before the discussion regarding enhanced regulation occurred. He said the council will review the ordinance in the future to make it consistent with the county's.

Orcutt said with Orchid and Fellsmere willing to consider the stronger ordinance, Sebastian is the municipality that may need some convincing. The Council voted 4-1 in September not to change from the current "Florida Friendly" ordinance currently in place.

At the time, Andrea Coy was the only council member willing to strengthen the ordinance. But with the recent election of Richard Gillmor to the council, Orcutt is hopeful they will reconsider the issue at a future date.

"We'll have to work on it," Orcutt said.

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