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For Immediate Release

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FERTILIZER INDUSTRY FIGHTS LOCAL FREEDOM
Polluters attack as locals seek solutions

A remarkable battle has erupted in the waning days of the 2007 Legislature, between local governments and the fertilizer industry. Three statewide environmental groups – Sierra Club, Clean Water Network of Florida and PURRE - are leading a grassroots effort to tip the balance toward the local government side.

With only two weeks left in the session, it would seem too late for anyone to initiate new legislation. But not if your members include power-polluters like Dow, DuPont and Ben Hill Griffin. Legislative newbie Brian Nelson is growing a name for himself by taking the lead for the fertilizer industry. On Friday April 20th, he introduced an amendment to HB 1197 in the House Policy and Budget Council. The amendment will strip cities and counties of their basic right to protect the water in their communities.

“As citizens across Florida confront the toxic effects of red tide and red-drift algae in our coastal waters and cyanobacteria in our springs and rivers, some members of the Legislature are fighting to keep the pollution flowing,” said Stuart DeCew, red-tide campaigner for the Florida Sierra Club.

Some local governments are growing tired of watching the fish turn belly-up and are taking proactive steps to curb the reckless application of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers. Public education is on the rise and citizens everywhere are becoming more aware of how their gardening practices can affect their local waters.

“This industry, like many others in our state, has developed an overly fertilized ego,” said Linda Young, director of the Clean Water Network of Florida. “Like noxious weeds they are trying to take over. Our legislators need to treat them like we would any other nuisance – yank em up and throw em out.”

Sierra, Clean Water Network of Florida and PURRE are calling on their members, the general public and elected officials to reject this un-American attack on local control. The Senate version of HB 1197 will be the next target of the Nelson amendment. The environmental groups are urging citizens all over Florida to stand up to big business and say no!

“Any legislator that supports these bills to pre-empt local control should have to come rake red drift algae when the session is over,” said Mary Rawl, executive director of PURRE. “We could keep them busy in SW Florida for many months.”

The Caloosahatchee River, which runs from Lake Okeechobee to Sanibel Island, was listed as the #7 most endangered river in the nation in 2006.

“How much worse does this need to get before our legislators wake up?” said Rawl. **“This is an economic nightmare for SW Florida!”**

According to the 2004 scientific consensus report from the US Commission on Ocean Policy, **“Coastal waters are one of the nation’s greatest assets, yet they are being bombarded with pollutants from a variety of sources. Non-point source pollution (i.e. run-off from yards) has increased and is the primary cause of nutrient enrichment, hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, toxic contamination, and other problems that plague coastal waters.”**

“Any ‘one size fits all’ policy for fertilizer management does not fit a state as large and diverse as Florida,” said DeCew. **“It is in the public interest to craft and implement targeted local policies that respond to specific water quality concerns in each community.”**