

Clean Water Act

What Decision Makers Should Know

Alexa J. Lamm & Pei-wen Huang¹

Water is one of Florida's most abundant natural resources. Water is a crucial resource that impacts not just the environment, but important industries that contribute to Florida's economy, such as tourism, agriculture, and business. To avoid water conflicts between users, enact appropriate public policy, and responsibly manage water resources, it is important to understand the best available science on the topic as well as public opinions about water issues.

Public opinions of water in Florida

1. Floridians are more concerned about water quality and safety than water quantity.
2. Florida residents place the most importance on clean drinking water (93%). They are then concerned with clean beaches (90.5%), oceans (89.3%), bays/estuaries (89.1%), lakes and rivers (88.9%); plentiful water for agriculture (88.6%); and clean groundwater (88.1%).
3. More people believe that water quality is getting worse as opposed to getting better.
4. 34.4% of Floridians said quality is declining in bays and 33.9% believe the water quality of our oceans is declining.
5. Almost 40% of Florida residents have experienced some kind of negative impact due to water quality including poor quality drinking water; closed beaches, springs, rivers, or lakes; and prohibitions on eating fish they have caught.
6. Almost 50% of Florida residents feel saltwater intrusion is a highly or extremely important issue.

Specific information about the Clean Water Act

Sources of pollutants: Pollutants impacting water quality include pathogens, nutrients, sediment, and metals. Currently, the major pollutants found in Florida are nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, through leaching and runoffs.

Clean Water Act is the foundation of other programs: Clean Water Act-derived programs include the:

- National Pollution Discharge Elimination System program;
- Pretreatment programs;
- Biosolids programs;
- National Estuary Program;
- National Coastal Water Program;

- Oil Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Program; and
- Total Maximum Daily Loads.

Impacts to the environment: Nutrient pollutants can lead to algae blooms in water bodies, including streams, lakes, and others. Such a water quality impact can be harmful to humans, wildlife, and tourism.

Best Management Practices: Best Management Practices (BMPs) are methods that have been determined to be the most effective, practical means of preventing or reducing pollution from nonpoint sources. These practices have been developed for agricultural and public uses.

Water quality monitoring: Since water quality decrease can be influenced by seasonal climate and human activities, water quality should be monitored continuously to ensure water use safety.

For more information visit www.piecenter.com/pep.

¹Authored by Alexa J. Lamm, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication and Associate Director, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education at the University of Florida and Pei-wen Huang, Graduate Assistant, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, University of Florida.

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