

Clean Water Act

What the General Public Should Know

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The Clean Water Act is a federal law that regulates pollutant discharges to ensure water quality standards for surface water is upheld. A variety of pollution control programs have been implemented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act requires all states establish water quality standards according to designated uses of water bodies, and to monitor water quality. It provides a system for identifying impaired waters and for developing estimated loads of pollutants that each water body could receive and still meet water quality standards.

Important Items

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.

The 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. They 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.

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