

Southwest Florida Water Management District

2010-2011 Fertilizer Campaign

Background

Public service advertising is one initiative the District has traditionally used to promote water resources conservation and protection.

The FY2011 campaign, which ran mid-February to mid-May 2011, included television and radio as its primary paid media components. Two television ads were aired, which promoted the following behaviors: follow package directions, use slow-release fertilizer and don't fertilize before a heavy rain. Two radio ads, both in English and Spanish, were also included in the campaign. All advertising directed residents to the District's website for additional water quality protection tips.

Other components of the campaign provided residents with more in-depth information about best management practices when selecting and applying fertilizer. These components included a website, seven how-to videos, *A Do-it-Yourself Guide to Florida-Friendly Fertilizing* booklet, a tip card and partner outreach. As an incentive, free soil tests were promoted in the District's *WaterMatters.org Newsletter* and on the District's Facebook page.

Purpose

To report results of the FY2011 "Florida-Friendly Fertilizing" campaign, which promoted water quality protection through appropriate fertilizer use.

Goal

The campaign goal is to increase District residents' knowledge about proper fertilizing procedures and the negative aspects of over-fertilizing or failing to follow package directions. A resulting goal will be to positively impact residents' self-reported proper fertilizing behaviors.

Objectives

The six objectives (three knowledge and three behavioral) of the fertilizer campaign are to (1) increase by 10% the number of residents who know they should read and follow fertilizer package instructions, (2) increase by 10% the number of residents who know they should use slow-release fertilizer, (3) increase by 10% the number of residents who know they should not fertilize before a heavy rain, (4) increase by 5% the number of residents who read and follow package instructions, (5) increase by 7% the number of residents who use slow-release fertilizer and (6) decrease by 10% the number of residents who fertilize before a heavy rain.

Methods

In planning the FY2011 campaign, staff incorporated several insights from previous campaigns to enhance results, including:

- Promoting quick, easy and normal actions that protect water quality.
- Using a consistent tag line to tie all messages together.
- Incorporating focus group feedback to make the messages clearer and to emphasize selected benefits associated with "Florida-Friendly Fertilizing."
- Featuring the Tom and Stan characters from the previous year's "Skip a Week" campaign. The same actors were again featured in both of this year's ads, likely aiding viewer recall.
- Extending the duration of the campaign by staggering the media buy over three months rather than two.

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- Integrating messages through existing District programs, events, materials and media to extend exposure.

Following a plan initiated with the District's FY2009 drought campaign, staff incorporated social research tools to help create more effective messages and to more effectively evaluate the campaign's success. These tools were incorporated in the following campaign development steps:

- Pretesting messages: After developing a potential set of messages for the FY2011 campaign, staff wrote scripts and created rough video versions of the ads. These versions were pretested with focus groups, whose feedback was incorporated into final messages.
- Pre-campaign survey: Prior to the campaign, a Districtwide survey was conducted to measure residents' attitudes, behaviors and level of awareness about proper fertilizing practices. This survey was conducted in early January 2011.
- "Florida-Friendly Fertilizing" campaign: The ads ran mid-February to mid-May 2011.
 - Media and messaging included the following:
 - Television ads
 - Radio ads
 - Newspaper ads
 - Facebook posts and ads
 - Online ads
 - Billboards
 - Bus wraps
 - Collateral pieces, including giveaways and tip cards
 - News releases and articles
 - *WaterMatters Magazine*
 - *WaterMatters.org Newsletter* (online)
 - Editorial board meetings
 - District website
 - Emails to homeowners associations
 - How-to videos
 - Utility bill stuffers
 - Pledge
 - Banners and signs for Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ coordinators
 - Tip card with list of questions to ask a lawn care professional
 - *A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Florida-Friendly Fertilizing* booklet
 - News media interviews and appearances
 - Partnership with Lowe's (in-store promotions with FYN coordinators)
- Post-campaign survey: In May, immediately after the "Florida-Friendly Fertilizing" campaign was completed, a follow-up Districtwide survey was conducted to gauge the impact of the campaign. District staff received results from the research consultant in late June.

Advertising results

The success of advertising campaigns is traditionally measured in reach, frequency and number of gross impressions. Reach and frequency numbers indicate that 98.9% of the people in the

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District were exposed 40 times each to the campaign's messages through advertising. The advertising buy also garnered more than 151 million gross impressions. These numbers are comparable to last year's campaign.

Research results

Both pre- and post-campaign surveys were conducted via telephone Districtwide. The 1,152 respondents included both homeowners (87%) and renters (13%) who had lawns that someone in the household fertilized and who were responsible for decisions concerning fertilizer.

Campaign recall

After the campaign, 48% of respondents recalled advertisements that gave tips on proper fertilizing techniques. The following tips were recalled most often: never fertilize before a heavy rain (29%), read and follow package instructions (26%) and water your lawn with about ¼" of water after fertilizing (20%).

Campaign accomplishments

The research confirms key campaign messages were received. Survey results indicate the following:

- 40% of respondents were able to recall at least one of the terms used in the campaign (unaided)
- 44% (36% pretest and 52% posttest) increase in the number of respondents who believed that the way in which they fertilized their lawns can harm the environment
- 100% (10% pretest and 20% posttest) increase in the number of respondents who applied 1/4" of water to their lawns after fertilizing
- 43% (28% pretest and 16% posttest) decrease in the number of respondents who fertilized before a heavy storm
- 89% (88% pretest and 89% posttest) reported they read and follow fertilizer package directions, according to both the pre- and post-campaign surveys, so there was little room for improvement in this area
- 96% of those receiving a copy of *A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Florida-Friendly Fertilizing* booklet found it helpful

Accomplishments related to education components of the program include:

- 7,987 unique hits to *WaterMatters.org/fertilizing*
- 13,489 *A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Florida-Friendly Fertilizing* booklets distributed
- 10,902 *Florida-Friendly Fertilizing Tips* cards distributed
- 1,983 hits on the how-to videos and commercials on the District's YouTube channel
- 294 requests for a free soil test
- 1.5 million impressions from the District's *Florida-Friendly Fertilizing* web banners on WTVT-TV's *MyFoxTampaBay.com* from February through April
- 5 added-value radio interviews on 970 WFLA-AM and CBS Radio
- 260,000 print and web impressions and 68,532 television viewers reached as a result of District-issued news releases and outreach to the news media
- Through partnerships with the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program, 11,243 people reached directly through workshops, presentations, events and Ask-An-Expert tables at retail outlets; 183,041 people potentially reached indirectly through exhibits, newspaper articles and electronic media