

# Conservation News

*Environmental News and Information from the City of Melbourne Public Works & Utilities*

## Cleaner Area Waterways Can Be Achieved With Environmentally-Responsible Boating

One reason many of us choose to live in Melbourne and other areas in Brevard County is the water. The Atlantic Ocean, Indian River Lagoon, Banana River Lagoon, Lake Washington, the St. Johns River and other waterways beckon us to come and enjoy all they have to offer.

Each day hundreds of boaters take advantage of local waterways. With our increasing population, there are increases in threats to the richness and beauty of the waters which provided the attraction in the first place. Boating-related activities can contribute substantially to the degradation of our water resources.

Learn to use your boat wisely to limit your impact and help preserve our waterways. If followed, these easy clean-water boat tips can make a big difference:

### Underway

- ◆ Keep trash from blowing overboard; bring it back to port for proper disposal.
- ◆ Follow no-wake postings and keeps wakes down in shallow or near-shore areas to prevent erosion.
- ◆ Avoid boating in shallow waters, especially those with submerged vegetation.
- ◆ Report oil spills or debris violations to the proper authori-



*Boater enjoys an outing on a local waterway.*

ties.

- ◆ Minimize the use of plastic disposable objects. If used, be sure to dispose of them properly on land.
- ◆ Never litter. Retrieve all items dropped into the water, especially old fishing line. Retrieve any litter found in the water.
- ◆ Do not fill bottles or cans with water and try to sink them. Dispose of them properly on shore.

### At the Dock

- ◆ Always use pump-out facilities to empty on-board sewage holding tanks.
- ◆ Use shore-side restrooms and garbage facilities.
- ◆ Keep a sealable container for garbage on your boat. Make everyone use it. When disposing of your garbage at a marina, follow the recycling rules.
- ◆ Minimize fish waste disposal in marina waters.
- ◆ Whenever possible, do

repairs and painting in dry dock; keep paints and paint chips away from the water.

- ◆ Check you engine regularly to see if it is leaking oil or gas. When filling gas tanks or adding oil, be careful not to spill.

### On Your Boat

- ◆ Use oil absorbent materials in your bilge and for spill cleanup.
- ◆ Refrain from using detergents and bilge cleaners; never pump them overboard.
- ◆ Use the smallest amount of the least toxic products available when cleaning.
- ◆ Be careful when fueling; catch any overflow with petroleum absorbent materials.
- ◆ Install an overflow alarm on your fuel tank.
- ◆ When doing small repairs, sanding or scraping, use tarps to catch pollutants.
- ◆ When cleaning your boat, avoid toxic polishes or stain removers near the water line.

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## Now is the time to prepare yards for storms

Hurricane season began June 1 and experts predict another active season. Before any storm is threatening is the time to prepare your yard. Once a storm is heading toward our coast, many other preparations will need to be given attention, including buying lumber and boarding up windows, purchasing bottled water and other supplies, ensuring insurance papers and other important documents are easily accessible, filling up gas tanks and making sure to have enough cash on hand in case of extended power failures that would render ATMs and even credit cards unusable.

The City of Melbourne is advising residents and businesses to remove any dead limbs and branches from trees, and trim them back if needed. Also, check for and

remove trash and debris that could easily be caught in high winds and inflict injury to people or damage property. This sort of yard debris could also get caught in storm drains, ditches and canals and increase the potential for flooding.

Yard waste is collected on the mainland every Monday, and on the beachside every Thursday. The yard waste needs to be placed in plastic or metal containers that don't exceed 32 gallons in capacity. Plastic bags are not accepted.

Homeowners should also check their garages for unused household hazardous waste items that could be spilled as a result of a storm. The Sarno Road landfill accepts this waste at no charge on Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Irrigate efficiently for best landscape results

With so many showers and storms that typically occur in the summer, it is important to pay attention to your lawn watering habits. Damage can be done from too much watering or too little. Overwatering can cause many common problems, such as dollar weed and fungal growth.

The best way to determine how much water to apply is by visual inspection and keeping track of how much water the lawn is getting from both rain and irrigation.

Visual signs of stress from lack of water include the lawn turning a blueish-gray color, footprints lingering after being made, leaf blades folding in half, and/or soil from the root zone feeling dry.

St. Augustine lawns only need watering once or twice a week in the summer and Bahia grass may need even less. However, a hearty rain can eliminate the need for watering for up to two weeks. A rain gauge will help you keep track of how much rain has fallen in your yard. The City of Melbourne has a limited supply of rain gauges that are supplied to customers free of charge. If you would like to request one, call 674-5761 or e-mail you request to [jwilster@melbourneflorida.org](mailto:jwilster@melbourneflorida.org). Be sure to include your address and phone number.

Another good irrigation practice is to connect a rain sensor shut-off device to your irrigation system. It will automatically



*A rain gauge can help determine irrigation needs.*

turn off the system when it detects a certain amount of rain. Automatic sprinkler systems installed after May 1991 are required to have these devices by state law. Otherwise, manually turn your irrigation system off during periods of rainy weather. Give your lawn an average of half an inch of water when you irrigate. To determine how long it takes your system to put out this much water, place cans or other containers around your yard and measure the amount of water collected in half an hour. Measure the amount in each can, add together, then divide by the number of cans for the average. Turf should receive no more than one inch of water per week. Remember, it is better to water your lawn and plants well once a week than it is to water lightly every day. Thorough watering encourages roots to establish themselves deeper in the soil, which makes them more drought tolerant. The exception to deep watering is for newly installed plants, where the roots are still close to the surface.

Irrigation is only allowed between the hours of **4 p.m. and 10 a.m.** This rule applies whether the source is City-supplied water or from a private well. Reclaimed water is exempt from the restriction as is the discharge from an air conditioning unit. This rule has been established to minimize loss of water through evaporation.



## Water quality report coming in June

In mid to late June, Melbourne water customers will receive the City's annual Consumer Confidence Water Quality Report in the mail.

The report covers water quality testing performed during 2003 and explains the City's water in relation to state and federal standards.

If you do not receive a copy of the report or if you would like to request additional copies, please call the City's Public Works & Utilities Department at 674-5761 or send an e-mail request to [jwilster@melbourneflorida.org](mailto:jwilster@melbourneflorida.org). There will also be copies available at the City Hall Utility Billing Desk at 900 E. Strawbridge Avenue and online at the City's web site ([www.melbourneflorida.org](http://www.melbourneflorida.org)).

## Outdoor water conservation tips

Besides practicing efficient outdoor lawn and plant irrigation, there are many other ways to save water outdoors. Following are some ideas:

- ◆ Pay attention to your hose. Left unattended, a garden hose can pour out 600 gallons of water in an hour.
- ◆ Check all hoses, connectors and spigots regularly to make sure they are in good working order.
- ◆ Use a broom to clean leaves and other debris from sidewalks and driveways rather than a hose to wash them down.
- ◆ Outfit your hose with a shut-off nozzle that can be adjusted so water flows only as needed. When finished, turn off the water at the faucet instead of the nozzle to avoid leaks.