



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Charlie Crist
Governor

Jeff Kottkamp
Lt. Governor

Michael W. Sole
Secretary

Dear Florida Water Quality Scientists and Managers:

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has embarked upon the challenging task of deriving numeric water quality standards for the protection of our extremely valuable estuaries and coastal waters from nutrient over-enrichment. Excess nitrogen and/or phosphorus in our marine waters can cause damage to the ecosystem and disrupt recreational opportunities for our citizens and visitors. It is critical that we establish protective and scientific numeric nutrient criteria to better assess and manage water quality in the future.

While we recognize that establishing numeric values for our varied and unique estuaries around the state is difficult, it is important that we derive numbers now. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is currently under a consent decree to establish numeric criteria in Florida and it is incumbent upon us to compile the best science possible to inform that effort. Given the timeframes associated with the consent decree, it is critical that we generate values for consideration by July 2010.

We understand that this does not allow time for new studies, so we will have to rely on the conclusions of previous studies and data collection efforts, as well as the expert knowledge of the many marine water quality practitioners in the state to inform our decisions. We recognize the scientific challenge this initiative represents and know that uncertainty regarding ecological response to nutrients exists in many of our estuaries. But we must synthesize our current knowledge, account for the uncertainty, and move forward with our best efforts to generate supportable numeric values for the protection of our water resources.

While DEP may be leading this effort, we know that we cannot succeed without tapping the vast amount of knowledge that exists in the Florida citizenry. Please lend us your time and knowledge this year as we set history in Florida again by becoming among the first states in the country with marine criteria to protect our waters from excess nutrient pollution.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this process further, please feel free to contact Russ Frydenborg, Administrator of DEP's Standards and Assessment Program, at (850) 245-8063.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael W. Sole".

Michael W. Sole
Secretary