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Thaxton appointed to statewide Consumer Fertilizer Task Force

Sarasota County's leadership in developing a local fertilizer ordinance has earned County Commissioner Jon Thaxton an appointment to a statewide Consumer Fertilizer Task Force. The task force was created by the Florida Legislature to evaluate strategies to reduce water quality impacts from fertilizer runoff, identify additional research needs and develop model ordinances on the use of nonagricultural fertilizer for local governments concerning.

The 13-member group consists of landscape architects, environmentalists and representatives from the fertilizer industry. Senator David Aronberg and Rep. Bryan Nelson represent the state legislature. All members must be technically qualified by training, education or experience in water quality, horticulture or agronomic science.

The Florida Association of Counties selected Thaxton to serve as its representative on the task force in recognition of Sarasota County's proactive measures on environmental and water issues. In addition, Sarasota County is one of the few local governments to adopt a fertilizer ordinance. Thaxton will advocate minimum state standards for fertilizer use and local government discretion to enact local ordinances most appropriate to their unique water and environmental needs.

Sarasota County adopted its fertilizer ordinance after a year-long collaborative process that included environmental groups, homeowners, government and fertilizer industry representatives. According to Thaxton, the ordinance may become the foundation for a statewide model.

The Consumer Fertilizer Task Force held its first meeting in September in Sarasota and a second meeting on Oct. 11 in Gainesville. The group will continue to meet in various locations around the state. The meetings are being facilitated by the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium, a mediation entity under the state university system, and will make final recommendations to the legislature by Jan. 15.