

Dr. Mark Clark to present on phosphorus loads in the environment and practices to address the problem  
By: Corine Burgess

If you are an agricultural land manager or if you're interested in the dynamics of wetlands and phosphorus, mark your calendar for May 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors have arranged to have a very informative presentation at 4:00 p.m. at the Bert J. Harris Agricultural Center Auditorium located at 4509 George Blvd. in Sebring. Dr. Mark Clark will be presenting on "Conventional and Emerging Wetland Treatment Systems to Address Phosphorus Loads in the Environment." The presentation is free and it will address how agricultural landowners may benefit and help the environment by using best management practices on their land.

Two of the planet's biggest challenges are providing food for a growing population and protecting the environment. Conservationists and landowners now, more than ever, must work together to face increasing obstacles that come with a growing population. The demand for more land, water and resources are ever increasing. Since Highlands County is composed largely of agricultural lands, it is more important than ever that landowners practice best management practices on their property in an effort to help resolve these issues. Agriculture represents one of the most cost-effective ways to improve one of the most pressing environmental challenges: water quality.

Many cost incentives and cost sharing programs are available to the land managers who implement best management practices on their property. By being involved in reducing phosphorus in our water bodies, these programs may benefit not only the landowner but the environment. Most agricultural land owners are excellent conservationists and care deeply for the land. It is certainly in their best interest to take care of the water since that is their livelihood. This presentation will be helpful and allow the audience to take away vital and useful information regarding phosphorus loads, wetlands and how to implement landscapes, designs and other approaches to face the problem of nutrient loads head on.

Dr. Clark has vast knowledge in the water quality field and is an Associate Professor at the Soil and Water Science Department at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Dr. Clark also serves as the Wetlands and Water Quality Extension Specialist at UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. He has a Master of Science in Wetlands Ecology from the Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences and has a Doctorate in Wetland Biogeochemistry from the Soil and Water Science Department both at the University of Florida.

His expertise in wetland ecology, water quality and watershed processes are well known and should prove beneficial to all who attend. He has done research that includes wetland nutrient assimilation and storage processes, vegetative succession dynamics, wetland macrophyte ecophysiology, and ecological engineering design using natural and integrated processes to improve water quality and enhance ecological function of altered landscapes.

The nutrient level numbers in our lakes and wetlands are cause for concern. Dr. Clark will address this issue and give recommendations on how to find and implement best management practices that could reduce these numbers. His agenda topics include: phosphorus dynamics in upland and wetland landscapes, conventional use of wetlands to treat phosphorus, and alternative/integrative/multi-optimization approaches to address phosphorus loads. This last topic includes sources and source control, integrated landscapes and intensive designs with crop/product recovery.

If you have questions or need additional information, please call (863) 402-6545.