

What Happened To Our Fish?

Fish kills can be unexpected, but there are things you can do to help reduce the likelihood and frequency of their occurrence.

Be Aware...

It Rains...
Drains!

When



For more information on fish kills or stormwater pollution call or e-mail the

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OFFICE OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
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FLORIDA'S SPACE COAST

Fish Kills and Stormwater Pollution





What Happened To The Fish?

Fish kills happen regularly. In fact, the first records of fish kills in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) were by fishermen, pioneers, and hunters. Some fish kills happen naturally due to seasonal temperature changes and others are the result of pollution. Both are caused by changes in water quality that lowers dissolved oxygen (DO) levels in the water and fish suffocate. If the low DO is in a pond, or a particular segment of a larger water body, it may be possible to add oxygen using air and water pumps or mechanical water movement to improve the DO. However this treatment should be considered temporary first aid for the water body. It is important to identify the cause of the DO drop to determine a remedy.

As stormwater flows down the gutter and into the drain it picks up nutrients/ pollutants on the ground and in your yard. These include phosphorus and nitrogen from fertilizers, other nutrients, and detergents. When they enter the water algae feed off of these nutrients/pollutants and start to reproduce quickly. This causes an algae bloom. The algae uses up most of the oxygen in the water causing the fish to suffocate.

Fiction:

Fish kills only occur when there is something toxic or unhealthy in the water.

Fact:

Fish kills frequently occur because there is a low level of dissolved oxygen in the water.

Fiction:

Fish kills cause human health problems.

Fact:

Though aromatic, most decaying fish pose no human health hazards.

Fiction:

Fish kills damage the fish population in a water body.

Fact:

Typical fish kills usually only affect a small percentage of fish in the water body.

Fiction:

All fish kills are a direct result of human interference.

Fact:

The main reason for fish kills is a low level of dissolved oxygen in the water.



What Can I Do To Help?



Don't dispose of any hazardous materials down the storm-drain.

Mulch leaves and grass clippings. Do not blow them into the street or storm drain.

Use pesticides and fertilizers according to the directions.

Clean up after your pet (the waste is high in nutrients and bacteria)

Wash your car on the lawn and not on the driveway.

Will Brevard County clean up dead fish?

Your local government may respond to a report and identify a possible cause, but they typically do not clean up dead fish unless it becomes a health issue. Maintenance of private storm water ponds is usually the responsibility of the Homeowners Associations, including dead fish in those ponds. Homeowners, if they wish, may bury the fish under plants, as they make good fertilizer, or dispose of them in the garbage. However, scavenger birds/animals usually eat the fish within a few days. Fish kills in the IRL, small ponds, and St. Johns River are fairly frequent.