

## **FISH KILLS**

During the spring, kills involving only one species can occur and these are caused from stress brought on by spawning activities. Along coastal areas of Florida, surface and groundwater inflows of salt water can kill freshwater fishes.

Decomposing vegetation from aquatic plant control operations may reduce oxygen levels in the water. If this occurs during times when other environmental conditions cause low levels of dissolved oxygen, fish kills may occur. It is essential that only herbicides that have been approved for use in aquatic sites by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) be utilized in strict accordance with the label and that consideration be given to weather conditions and DO levels prior to application.

Application of pesticides to control lawn and crop insects can enter a pond during heavy rains and cause a fish kill. Use of any type of chemical pesticide should be done with extreme caution around all water bodies.

Very few kills result in total loss of the population. Remaining fish can usually reproduce and quickly restore the population. Occasionally, undesirable species will tolerate low DO and dominate the population. Many people incorrectly assume that these "trash fish" have out competed sport fishes; however, this is actually a situation where hardy "trash fish" species have thrived in a situation of poor water quality that other species find intolerable. A good fishing pond can sometimes be ruined by a fish kill while others may benefit. **Repeated kills may necessitate the installation of an aeration system that will maintain DO levels.**

People can only prevent fish kills by maintaining good water quality. Once a kill starts, there is nothing that can be done. State and most county agencies cannot clean up dead fish and private landowners must undertake the task themselves. Kills occurring on city-maintained lakes are often cleaned up by city crews. Concerned individuals can report fish kills to the Commission, especially if they suspect that a kill is a result of toxic spills. Discussions with pond owners often lead to determinations of cause and Commission biologists can provide recommendations to prevent future kills. On-site investigations are done on water bodies with public access and when environmental laws have been broken.