



# PLANT CITY BIKERS: WHAT ARE THEY DOING ON YOUR LAWN?



*The Meter Reader section consists of a crew of four meter readers and one foreman. In 2007, they read over 149,016 meters!*



YOUR PUBLIC WORKS

# Working For You



**What's it like to be a meter reader?** The City is divided into four zones and the meters are read weekly. The meter readers use scooters to transport them to each meter location, and must have a valid motorcycle license to do so. Meter reads must be completed on Wednesday of each week no matter what the weather conditions are. Some of the dangers that meter readers encounter while they are performing their duties are snakes and fire ants in the water meter boxes, dogs that are not properly contained in their yards, and the heat in the summer months. The heat conditions can get well above 100 degrees, and helmets must be worn while riding the scooter!

**What duties do they perform?** In 2007, the meter readers replaced over 1,521 water meters and completed approximately 3,558 work orders consisting of: replacing meters, testing water meters, pulling meters, re-routing, curb stop replacement, lowering and raising meters and boxes, replacing water meter boxes and lids, handling water pressure testing, turning off customers for non payment, and many other projects that were assigned to them.

**What does the future hold?** This section also completed a study on Automated Meter Reading (AMR) and had it approved by the City Management effective July 1, 2007. They are currently in the process of retrofitting the downtown section of Plant City, which will add 250 AMR meters and have another possible 150 AMR meters to add from the new Coronet Road project. All new developments after July 1, 2007 are required to have AMR meters installed. These meters will allow our staff to drive by and read the meters with a laptop computer, which will save time and reduce exposure to safety hazards. An added feature of the program is a remote receiver for the customer to purchase or to be loaned out from Utilities Billing. The receiver will allow a customer to monitor their water consumption and usage.

*-Submitted by Bill Russell, Foreman, Utilities Maintenance Division*



*Above photos:  
A typical day  
reading meters  
with the red  
scooter.*



*Below photos:  
Replacing  
meters and  
repairing leaks.*



## What's This Person Costing You?

We've all seen this person before – they hit our cars with their old McDonald's bags, their cigarette butts bounce off of our hoods late at night, they toss bottles that smash on the side of the road that we could easily run over. The societal **litterbug** invokes a variety of emotional responses. When some people encounter them, they become enraged; others passively drive by, and then there are others that may join in.

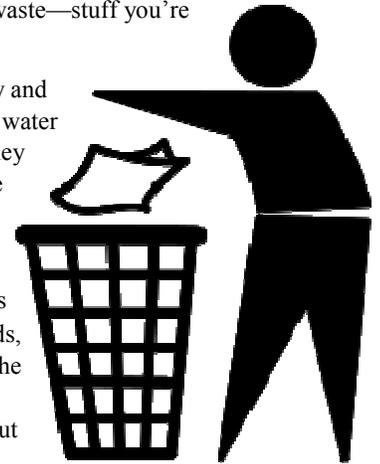
In the stormwater field, the saying "trash makes more trash" is all too true. Once a roadside has a little bit of litter – or a swamp has one tossed tire – other items quickly follow, and in some cases a landfill in miniature materializes. Soggy couches, left over French fries, antifreeze and oil jugs all gather together to paint the landscape and transform it from organic to geometric, from clean to toxic.

Surely, the **litterbug** can't think these items disappear on their own. According to an EPA study, the **litterbug** can't be stereotyped by age, race, class or sex. Major reasons cited for individual littering are laziness, lack of education, low self esteem, and the thought that someone else is paid to clean it up anyway. As we all know, nothing's free... who's really paying for that behavior?

Our City Stormwater Division utilizes up to twelve people to clean the roadsides, ditches, and waterways that become convenient trash cans for the **litterbug**. The crews collect an impressive amount of debris – nearly six tons per year. These crews are funded by – yep, you guessed it – tax dollars. It costs approximately \$262,080 per year to clean up after the **litterbug**, money that could be spent elsewhere on other projects in *Beautiful Plant City*. Most common trash item? Fast food wrappers and household waste—stuff you're paying to have picked up curbside!

Without these crews, the hallmarks of the **litterbug** ultimately cause flooding, noxious odors, unsightly and offensive (cigarette butts, human waste jugs) piles that lower property values and even contaminate our water supply. Sadly, our City Sanitation Division has a secondary hand in cleaning up after the **litterbug** – they respond to an average of four calls per week to remove dead animals from the road, many of which were there to snatch the harmless apple core that the **litterbug** left in or near the road. Unfortunately, the **litterbug**'s generosity provides many last meals.

As protectors of our own backyards, we wouldn't invite the **litterbug** over and let them toss their wares and wastes all over our home. Why are we paying for the **litterbug** to do this on our streets, in our fields, in our water? Our City Code, Article V, section 30-99 addresses this behavior – but rather than calling the Police, perhaps we can address the **litterbug** ourselves. Research indicates that the number one way to stop litter is societal pressure to do the right thing. It's your money. Protect it by spreading the word about putting litter in its place.



*-Submitted by Shawna Everidge, Environmental Education Coordinator*



*Gaillardia pulchella*  
Photo by Shirley Denton

*Photo by Shirley Denton, taken from the Atlas of Vascular Plants: www.plantatlas.usf.edu.*

## Spring Garden Give-Away!

The City of Plant City's Environmental Education Program recently received a grant from the Florida Wildflower Foundation to provide WILDFLOWERS to the community. We've given some out at Bikefest, some were provided at our environmental classes, some were donated to local schools—and now some are available to you by request!

Firewheel, or *Gaillardia pulchella*, is a Florida native plant that does well in full sun and sandy soils. It blooms in early spring and summer. Although its best to sow wildflowers during the fall, the extended central Florida growing season is flexible and conducive to late bloomers.

Call Shawna Everidge at 757-9289 x 2249 and leave your name, the address where you'd like your Florida Friendly kit delivered, and a phone number. Limited to City residents only—please allow up to four weeks for delivery.

To learn more about the Florida Wildflower Foundation, please visit [www.floridawildflowercouncil.org](http://www.floridawildflowercouncil.org).