

Partners in Planning

A PUBLICATION OF THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CITY-COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

RIVERNEWS

PROJECT HELPING RESTORE FLOW TO THE LOWER HILLSBOROUGH RIVER

The first project in the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Lower Hillsborough River Recovery Strategy, designed to meet the new minimum flows, is going strong.

The District's Governing Board approved new minimum flows for the lower portion of the river in Aug. 2007, as well as a Recovery Strategy to restore flows to the river and a funding agreement with the City of Tampa on a series of minimum flow-related projects.

A minimum flow or level is the limit at which further water withdrawals will cause significant harm to the water resources and related environment. The state Legislature requires the District to set minimum flows and levels for priority water bodies to prevent significant harm associated with withdrawals. If a water body is not meeting its levels, the District is required to develop a recovery strategy.

The new minimum flows for the Lower Hillsborough River are 24 cubic feet per second (cfs) during April-June and 20 cfs the remainder of the year. An independent, scientific peer review panel reviewed the new flows, which are at least twice the previous minimum flow of 10 cfs.



The District began pumping 11 cfs of water, or 7.1 million gallons per day (gpd), from the Tampa Bypass Canal to the Hillsborough River Reservoir on Dec. 31, 2007 as part of the Tampa Bypass Canal Diversion Project. The pumps are located at two structures on the canal. In turn, 8.25 cfs, or 5.3 million gallons per day, is being pumped from the reservoir to the base of the dam into the Lower Hillsborough River.

The new minimum flows must be met by 2017. With the diversion of 10 cfs from

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Sulphur Springs to the base of the dam by the city, the Tampa Bypass Canal Diversion Project is already helping the District meet about 80 percent of its goal or about 18.25 cfs.

Five potential projects identified in the Recovery Strategy:

- Move water from the Tampa Bypass Canal to the river. This project is providing up to 11 cfs for minimum flow purposes.
- Move additional water from Sulphur Springs to the base of the dam on the river. This is expected to provide on average 15 cfs.
- Move water from Blue Sink to the river. This could provide up to 3 cfs.
- Install a transmission pipeline for Tampa Bay Water's existing transfers of water from the Tampa Bypass Canal to the river for the City of Tampa. This could provide 3 cfs that would be used to help meet the minimum flow.
- Pump water from the Morris Bridge Sink to the canal, then to the river. This may provide up to 6 cfs.

All projects are subject to permitting and feasibility.



The District and Tampa negotiated a \$44.5 million funding agreement for projects to help meet minimum flows. Specifically, the District will pay 50 percent of the Sulphur Springs, Blue Sink and transmission pipeline projects, depending on feasibility and permitting. The agreement allows for other projects to be identified for potential funding if necessary to meet minimum flow requirements.

The District is paying 100 percent of the Tampa Bypass Canal Diversion Project and the Morris Bridge Sink Project.

Estuary Program Urges Guidelines for Residential Fertilizer Use

At the request of its Policy Board, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) coordinated the development of regionally appropriate guidelines on residential fertilizer use that could be incorporated into a local ordinance.

TBEP convened workshops that were well attended, with strong representation from local government stormwater and environmental managers, environmentalists, water quality and red tide researchers, the extension/horticultural research community, and members of the lawn care industry. A total of 42 organizations were represented during the workshop process.

At the initial workshop, participants selected four key topic areas for development of regional guidelines: Licensing and Certification of Commercial



Fertilizer Applicators; Buffer Zones Adjacent to Waterways; Application Timing; and Recommendations for Fertilization when Reclaimed Water is used for Irrigation. A consensus-building process was used to facilitate agreement on the specific recommendations within each general topic.

The key recommendations of the workshop participants are as follows:

Licensing/Certification of Fertilizer Applicators

- All site supervisors and managers of professional lawn care companies should be required to attain certification in the Florida Green Industries Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Protection of Water Resources in Florida training coordinated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and taught by professionals with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

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- Other employees of lawn and landscape maintenance companies should be required to complete less intensive, task-specific training (i.e., proper mowing, proper fertilization, mulching, debris cleanup, etc) within 90 days of hiring. This less intensive training could be provided by BMP-certified trainers within the company and provided annually or whenever an update is needed due to changes in the state-approved BMPs or local ordinances.
- Certification of additional Spanish-speaking BMP trainers and BMP courses taught in Spanish should be strongly encouraged.
- A baywide or “Tampa Bay Region” license or certificate should be created, encompassing Hillsborough, Manatee and Pinellas counties, so that commercial fertilizer applicators would not have to obtain separate BMP certification in each community in which they do business. Reciprocity should be strongly encouraged so that any Tampa Bay community with a fertilizer ordinance recognizes and accepts the regional certification. A special decal denoting this regional certification should be created, and all lawn care/landscape companies who have obtained BMP certification should be required to display this decal on their service vehicles.

Buffer Zones

- Fertilizer should not be applied by either professional applicators or homeowners within 10 feet of a waterway (defined as a bay, river, lake, stream, pond, canal, wetland or any other water body), unless a deflector shield is used. With a deflector shield, fertilizer may be applied up to 3 feet from a water body.
- Waterfront property owners should be encouraged to establish a 6-foot low-maintenance or “no mow” zone adjacent to waterways to reduce the potential for fertilizer residues entering bodies of water.



Application Timing



This was the one area for which consensus could not be reached. A variety of options were discussed at length and finally reduced to two. A straw vote was taken on these two options

with each organization, company or government entity in attendance asked to choose one representative to vote. The results are as follows:

- There were 17 votes in favor of a complete ban on application of Nitrogen fertilizer to residential lawns from June 1-Sept. 30.
- There were 11 votes in favor of allowing a one-time application of slow-release Nitrogen from June 1-Sept. 30 with a professional determination of a Nitrogen deficiency in turfgrass.

Reclaimed Water

- Educational information about the amount of Nitrogen contained in reclaimed water (treated wastewater) should be provided to homeowners in communities where reclaimed water is provided for irrigation of residential lawns.

Additional Consensus Items

In addition to those key topics, workshop participants were given the opportunity to present additional recommendations for consideration. As a result, the workgroup identified 11 additional consensus items, as follows:

- Education about proper fertilizer use is critically needed.
- Education about slow-release Nitrogen fertilizer is important to make homeowners aware that use of these products may not produce an immediate “greening” response in their lawns.
- Proper irrigation management is critical and inextricably linked to proper fertilization.
- Controlling spillage of fertilizer and organic debris on non-vegetated areas (including impervious

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ELAPP PLAYS KEY ROLE IN PROTECTING HILLSBOROUGH RIVER

On November 4, Hillsborough County voters will have an opportunity to continue the highly successful Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP) to preserve natural areas, wildlife habitat and water resources without increasing their tax bills.

Over the past 20 years, more than 50 environmentally sensitive tracts have been permanently protected through ELAPP. At least seven of those parcels lie within the Hillsborough River watershed and comprise nearly 6,600 acres. All of these naturally

vegetated areas protect the quality of the drinking water sources downstream.

The 2547-acre Cypress Creek Preserve at the apex of I-275 and I-75 is part of an extensive wildlife corridor extending northwards into Pasco County and providing a dispersal route for several rare and endangered species. Further downstream, the 118-acre Temple Terrace Riverfront Park, purchased by ELAPP with assistance from the Florida Communities Trust, supports a healthy and diverse wildlife population in an urban setting. It's another example

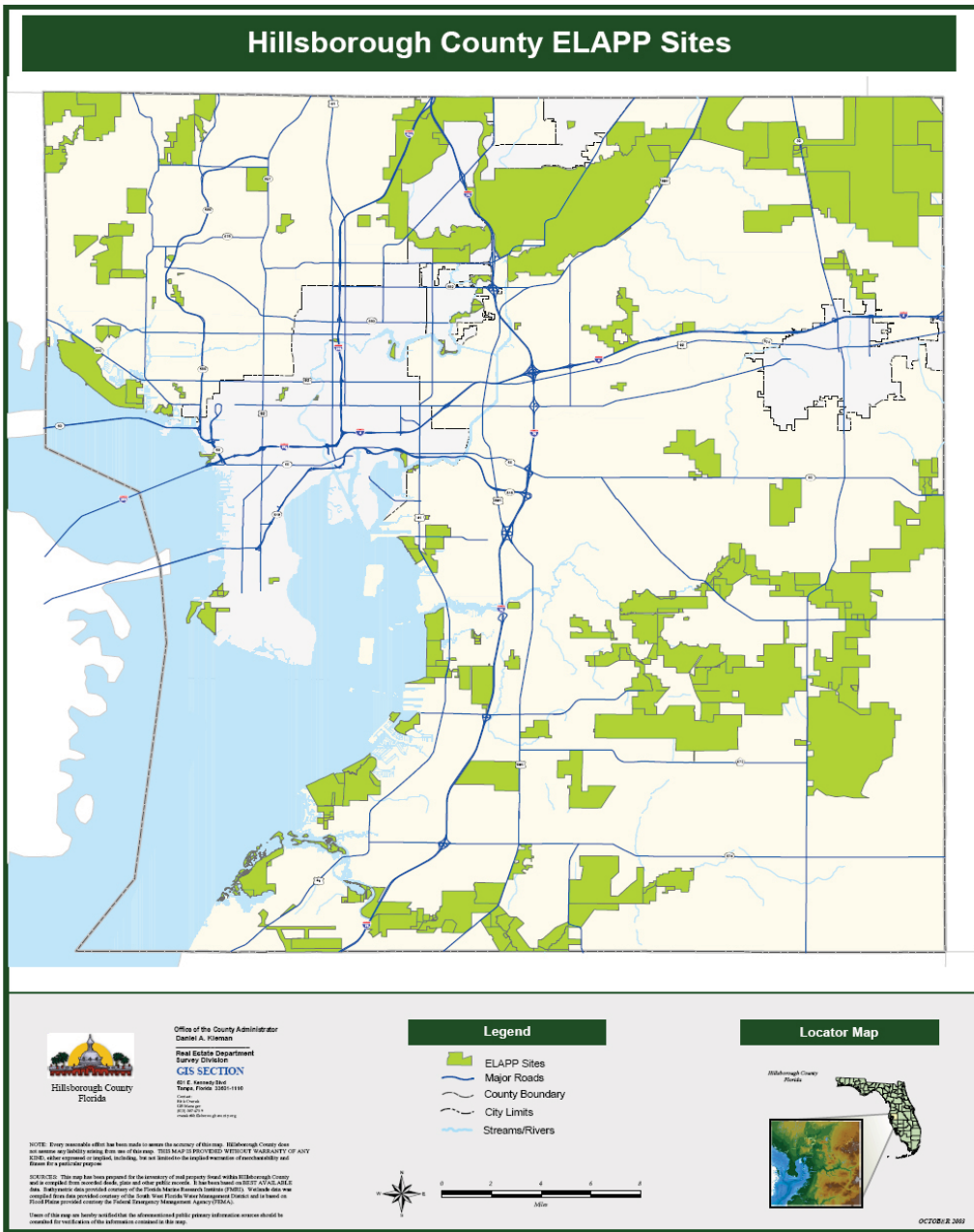
of how ELAPP administrators have stretched the buying power of ELAPP funds by securing matching funds from state sources such as the Florida Communities Trust.

Of the \$206 million expended by ELAPP for land preservation since its inception, \$76 million or 38 percent has been funded from other sources.

ELAPP was created with a 1987 referendum that called for the pay-as-you-go purchase of environmentally sensitive lands. Three years later, voters approved a bond referendum by 73 percent authorizing the expenditure of up to \$100 million. Over the last 20 years, ELAPP has acquired over 44,700 acres of land protecting some of Hillsborough's most important natural areas and water resources.

Earlier this year, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners accepted the recommendation of its ELAPP citizen advisory committee and voted unanimously to place a

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referendum on the November 4 ballot asking voters for authority to issue up to \$200 million in bonds to acquire and preserve lands which protect wildlife habitat, drinking water sources, and water quality of rivers, lakes and bays.

ELAPP has earned the strong support of nearly every resident in Hillsborough County familiar with the program. Not only has it protected many of the county's environmental gems, it has also been competently administered and has an impressive track record. A citizen advisory committee oversees the program and advises county commissioners on all purchasing and management decisions. An annual audit, available to the public, provides for public oversight and ensures the funds are spent as citizens intended. Land is only purchased from willing sellers on a voluntary basis.

Continuation of the Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program will not increase the annual tax burden on property owners. This is simply a continuation of the existing program, not a new tax.

With continued growth and development in Hillsborough County and the dwindling amount of natural lands, ELAPP helps balance new development with land preservation to ensure that a legacy of old Florida will be left to our children and grandchildren.

Don't overfertilize! You want your lawn green, NOT your water

Join the community effort to keep all our waters clean.

It's easy. Here's how:

- Don't fertilize before a heavy rain.
- Sweep up any fertilizer spilled on paved areas or any excess on the lawn and place it back in the fertilizer bag.
- Use only slow-release fertilizer.
- Leave a 10-foot no-pesticide, no-fertilizer zone around water bodies.
- Fertilize only twice a year and only during the growing season.

surfaces) is critical to protecting water quality.

- Use of deflector shields is an important element of fertilizer BMPs.
- No Phosphorous fertilizer should be applied at any time of year in the Tampa Bay region without a soil test showing a Phosphorous deficiency. This recommendation is a recognition of the extensive natural Phosphorous already present in soils in the region that make supplemental Phosphorous applications largely unnecessary.
- No Nitrogen fertilizer should be applied on newly established turf for the first 30 days.
- Consistent guidelines for fertilizer application are needed for the Tampa Bay region to encourage compliance and successful education of the public.
- Adequate enforcement is a key issue that needs to be addressed by any local government that adopts a fertilizer use ordinance.
- Fertilizer guidelines should encourage the use of trained, certified professionals to apply fertilizer.
- All landscape maintenance contracts should specify compliance with the DEP Florida Green Industries Best Management Practices.

Education

One entire workshop was devoted to a discussion of possible educational programs and strategies to educate key groups about proper fertilization of lawns in general, and the recommended regional guidelines in particular.

Workshop participants identified the following target audiences in need of educational outreach:

- Homeowners
- Condominium/Neighborhood Associations
- Retail Fertilizer Sales Outlets (Lowe's, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc)
- Lawn Care Professionals
- Municipal Landscape Maintenance Personnel

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program will now work with local partners to develop a model residential fertilizer ordinance. This model ordinance is expected to be completed, and available to local governments, by the end of the year.

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Hillsborough River Flow Data for Previous Quarter

