

Partners in Planning

A PUBLICATION OF THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CITY-COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

RIVERNEWS

Publications

- NEWSLETTER
- Permits Report
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- Tampa Neighborhood News
- River News

SEDIMENT REMOVAL PILOT PROJECT SHOWING SIGNS OF SUCCESS

The Hillsborough River runs through the heart of the City of Tampa and drains most of the metropolitan area. The City has made a concerted effort to preserve the river by reducing the pollutant loads contained in stormwater whenever possible. One such environmental preservation project was completed near Epps Park to reduce sediment loading into the Hillsborough River and associated flow into Tampa Bay.



In 2003, the City designed and installed a network of 8 sediment traps within the existing stormwater infrastructure. The traps function by settling out sediment as it flows through the device, collecting it in the bottom of the trap instead of being discharged to the River. Installation of these sediment traps provides treatment to the runoff from approximately 68 acres of land in the Old Seminole Heights neighborhood of Tampa. Sediment traps also

remove free oil and suspended solids from stormwater preventing hazardous spills and non-point source pollution from passing through the stormwater system.

Litter, vegetation, and sediments collected in the traps must be removed routinely. City stormwater crews check the level of sediment buildup within the installed traps to determine if cleanout maintenance is required. Much of the material collected looks like dirt, but actually consists of decomposed vegetative matter, and sand, silt and clay that binds with oil, hydrocarbons and trace metals. When the traps are full a vacuum truck is used to remove the sediment. The collected sediment is then separated from trash and vegetation prior to final disposal. The Stormwater Department operates a facility to provide this sorting function. Shaker screens are used to separate the dirt portion, which is then beneficially reused as landfill cover. The larger trash and vegetation are sent to the City's waste to energy facility to produce electricity.



It is environmentally and fiscally less costly to treat the sediment within the stormwater

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system rather than dredging accumulated sediment once it has settled on the riverbed. Through August 2007, City crews have removed approximately 1031 cubic feet of sediment from the traps. This reduction in sediment loading improves and maintains the water quality within the Hillsborough River as well as the available habitat for aquatic communities. These goals are consistent with those set in the Hillsborough River Master Plan to prevent pollution, improve aquatic habitat, and allow for navigation within the river.

ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSION IN MINOR PERMITTING FOR PORT AUTHORITY EXPANDED



In an effort to expedite the review process for certain marine permit applications, the Tampa Port Authority (TPA) and the Environmental Protection Commission

of Hillsborough County (EPCHC) have entered into an interlocal agreement which was finalized on November 15, 2007. The agreement delegates to the EPCHC the authority to review and prepare certain minor work permit applications for permit issuance by TPA, using the rules, polices, and procedures contained in TPA Submerged Lands Management Rules. The TPA, however, will continue to review all minor work permit applications for marine construction within the Port of Tampa, TPA owned uplands, and other marine construction proposals related to commercial vessel operations. Further, the TPA will continue to review all standard work permit applications for proposed projects anywhere within Hillsborough County.

In January 2008, an eighteen month training program of selected EPCHC staff personnel was initiated at the TPA. During this training period, all minor work permit applications will continue to be received at the TPA Environmental Department for review by an EPCHC trainee who is assigned there on a full time basis.

DURING DROUGHT SFWMD

REACHING OUT TO HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS

The Southwest Florida Water Management District is reaching out to homeowners associations and their residents to communicate the seriousness of the drought to the public and promote water conservation

Since December, the District has provided drought and water conservation information to more than 1,000 homeowners associations and 100 neighborhood associations in its 16-county area for use in their newsletters.



“We decided to employ a grass-roots effort during the fall and winter months to get the word out about the drought and some simple things people can do to conserve water and protect their property,” said Robyn Hanke, media relations manager for the Southwest Florida Water Management District. “And since some homeowners associations have fined their residents for brown lawns, reaching out to HOAs has been one of our top priorities.”

The District started by providing information on its Skip a Week public awareness campaign, which encourages residents to water every other week during the winter months, as well as practical information on how to check irrigation systems to make sure they are working properly. The District is also offering speakers to talk to homeowners associations about the drought and how they can do their part to conserve water.

“One of our goals during the drought has been to get District staff members out into the community speaking and educating on the drought,” said Hanke. “So far, we’ve had the opportunity to visit nearly 20 homeowners associations to educate the residents and answer their questions.”

The District is also offering free brochures and materials on its web site and promoting the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program through the county cooperative extension services. The Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program focuses on the use of Florida-friendly landscaping to create attractive landscapes that conserve water and protect the environment.

However, despite increased outreach and education to homeowners associations, the District still receives calls from homeowners that have been issued deed restriction violation notices by their association for brown lawns. Lois Sorensen, the District's Demand Management Coordinator, steps in to try and resolve the conflicts.

"I ask the homeowner to send me a copy of the notice. Once I receive a copy, I send a letter on behalf of the District that references the specific situation and reminds the HOA that we are in a drought and that residents are only allowed to water one day per week," said Sorensen. "I'm usually able to help resolve the conflict unless the homeowner ignored initial notices and has already heard from the association's attorney."

Sorensen asks homeowners associations to take into consideration that a lawn may not be in optimum condition when it can only be watered once a week, especially when the weather is warm and dry. She also encourages associations to allow homeowners to improve the appearance of their existing lawn through remedial actions such as mowing at the highest setting to discourage weeds and improve drought tolerance, providing proper nutrition and using spot-treatments of herbicides or pesticides. However, if a total lawn replacement is necessary, Sorensen suggests associations grant a time extension allowing homeowners to take advantage of the next summer rainy season, instead of needing to do extra "establishment period" watering during the drought.



In addition to sending a letter, Sorensen also coaches homeowners. Based on her past experience as a board member of her own HOA, she helps homeowners understand what the association can and cannot require. Using her Florida Master Gardener training, Sorensen also works with homeowners to make sure they are incorporating best management practices into their lawn and landscape maintenance. She also gets them in touch with their local Florida Yards & Neighborhoods coordinator or urban horticulture extension agent for additional assistance.

For simple tips on conserving water both indoors and outdoors, as well as information on Florida-friendly landscap-

ing, visit the District's web site WaterMatters.org/drought or contact the Hillsborough County extension office at (813) 744-5519.

Alan "Mr. River" Wright Passes Away



In December, shortly after the release of our last newsletter, long time advocate and Hillsborough River Board staff member, Alan "Mr. River" Wright passed away. We were saddened to learn of his passing. He was 54.

On Tuesday, January 29, a Celebration of Life Service was held in Alan's honor at Sulphur Springs

Tower Park along the banks of the river he loved so much. Nearly 250 citizens and officials, including Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio and Tampa City Councilwoman Linda Saul-Sena, joined Alan's friends and family to honor his lifetime of work and remember his constantly happy and outgoing spirit. Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission Executive Director, Dr. Richard Garrity, presented Alan's family with a Proclamation recognizing "Mr. River's" 22 years of service to the community. Planning Commission Executive Director, Robert B. Hunter, FAICP remembered Alan as a friend and steadfast employee.

Family and friends who attended the service were amazed by the outpouring of friendship and how much Alan served his community. Many never knew the extent of Alan's work as he never desired to be put in the spotlight or recognized. Protecting and rehabilitating the Hillsborough River was more than work, it became his mission in life. His many accomplishments with the Planning Commission and Hillsborough River Board were described in our last issue, yet his work and service to the community went beyond just his day to day duties. Alan was deeply involved in the Ryan White AIDS Foundation, worked with the Sulphur Springs neighborhood to better the community, and played an instrumental role in the development of Tampa's AIDS Memorial Park on Bayshore Boulevard.

Alan loved the Hillsborough River and touched every person he came in contact with. We will all miss his warm spirit and constant smile.

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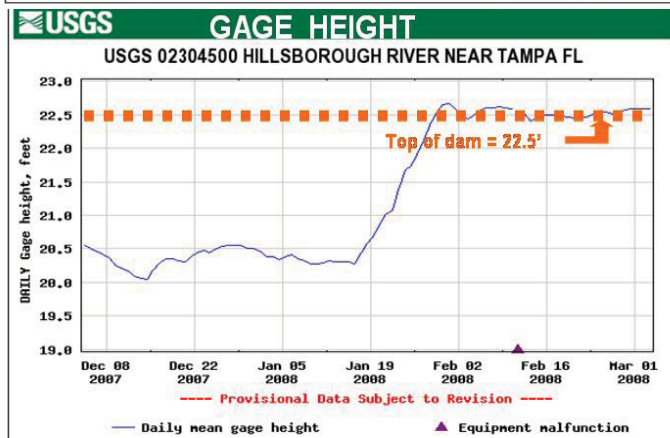
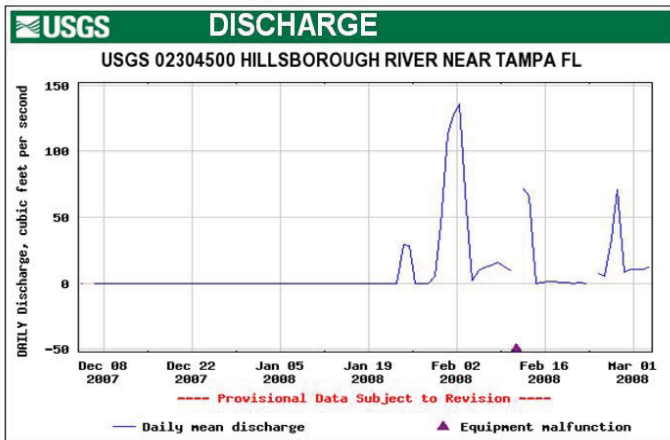
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Hillsborough River Flow Data for Previous Quarter



Technical Advisory Committee Re-Elects Carnahan as Chair

At its January regular Meeting the Hillsborough River Inter-Local Planning Board's Technical Advisory Committee re-elected Robert Carnahan as Chair. The TAC also re-elected Peter Owens as Vice Chair.

Licensing Required for Marine Contractors

The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners now requires a Specialty Contractor License for Marine Construction. Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace also require the same license and have signed inter-local agreements with Hillsborough County to utilize the County's licensing system and have the license apply countywide. This Specialty Contractor License includes work on seawalls, bulkheads, revetments, docks, piers, wharves, groins, and other marine structures including drive piling.

Contractors under this specialty are required to have at least one year experience in the same classification, supervised by a State Certified General or Registered Specialty Marine Contractor. Contractors must also post a \$5,000 Code Compliance Bond. This licensing requirement will help to ensure the citizens of Hillsborough County are served by qualified contractors.