

❖ RIVER NEWS ❖

Serving Tampa, Temple Terrace and Hillsborough County

Feb/Mar 2003

A Publication of the Hillsborough River Interlocal Planning Board & Technical Advisory Council

River Flow Slows as Rainfall Drops

January 2003 went into the record books as the third driest in history since records have been kept of meteorological data. This followed the seconded wettest December on record and shows how such variable conditions can quickly affect the outlook for the river and other waterbodies.

Flow in the river continued at near record rates during January and into February but began to slow in mid-month. With significantly less rainfall during the first two months of the year flows reacted to the diminished rainfall. Isolated rainfall events bumped up flows a bit but were not particularly significant.

With the lack of rainfall there is always the temptation to start irrigating plants and yards. Because of the prevailing cooler temperatures during the winter months plants don't need as much water to thrive. They can generally go two or three weeks easily without being watered. Intermittent rains should take care of that need naturally.

Water use restrictions should continue to be followed to help stretch what rainfall we have been blessed with so far this year. And lets hope not many more months like January are in the river's future.

ALWAYS CONSERVE!

KNOW YOUR DAY

ACCIDENTAL SPILL TAINTS RIVER DOWNTOWN



The Hillsborough River in downtown Tampa was visibly marred on February 10, 2003, when muddy runoff from a construction site many blocks away made its way to the river. Rainfall from a strong band of thunderstorms that punched through the area washed dirty water from a slurry pond

on the construction site into the nearby stormwater drainage system and carried it away to the river. Initial concerns were that the plume observed in the river could have contained chemical or toxic cleaning substances and could have caused more than just a visual blight. Fortune smiled on the river though as it was determined by the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) of Hillsborough County that the discoloration of the river was caused by muddy water and that it was only a temporary condition.

In a twist of irony, the construction site found to be the source for the pollutant inflow into the river is located at Pierce and Jackson Streets, where the County's new parking structure is underway. The Board of County Commissioners sits as the EPC Board and may have to consider taking punitive action in regard to this case.

KEEP IT SLOW - Manatee season continues through March



Manatees have been seen in the Hillsborough River over the winter months. Please help protect these gentle giants and boat as though their lives depend on it... THEY DO!



Your River Board wants to hear from YOU. Call the River Hotline, 272-5940.

RIVER BOARD/TAC MEETINGS SUMMARY



Commissioner Ronda R. Storms
New River Board Chair

The River Board met January 24th at the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) of Hillsborough County. The River Board elected County Commissioner Ronda Storms Chair and City of Temple Terrace Councilwoman Linda Shattles Vice Chair.

River Board action included supporting five Tampa Port Authority minor work permit applications, support for continued exploration by the County to establish a marine contractor licensing program, support for funding for a shoreline restoration project at Riverside



Riverside Garden Park's shoreline

Garden Park in Tampa, and support for a public awareness campaign to post signs along area roadways, marking where they cross the river. The River Board was briefed on a wide variety of issues and information its TAC has been considering including minimum flow issues, river



Sign posted along river

flow levels, future stormwater projects that would benefit the river, protection measures being formulated by the County to protect potable water supplies, including the river, and changes in use along the river such as Bank of America redevelopment plans in downtown Tampa and a shift in uses at Lowry Park to be located along the river's shoreline.

The TAC met January 21st at the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The primary agenda items presented and discussed were:

- City of Tampa's plans for stormwater treatment projects along the Hillsborough River;
- Status report on on-going issues/projects that the TAC has been monitoring or assisting in implementing;
- Report on status of US Army Corps of Engineers Study of Hillsborough River Basin;
- Recent river levels.

The TAC met on February 18th at the Tampa Port Authority. Items presented and discussed at this meeting include:

- Water quality evaluation process in relation to state's Impaired Waters Rule listing ;
- Manatee monitoring and protection strategies ;
- Proposed Boathouse at Riverfront Tampa in downtown Tampa;
- TAC Educational Projects

The March 18th TAC meeting will be held at the EPC offices in Ybor City and the April 15th meeting will be held in Temple Terrace at the Public Works Department. Both meetings begin at 1:30 p.m. To review the most up-to-date River Board and TAC agendas visit the Planning Commission's website www.theplanningcommission.org and click on the *Agendas* under the River Board/TAC logo or contact the River Board/TAC staff at 273-3774, extension 323.

River's Water Quality Under Review by State

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is in the first phase of implementation of its watershed approach for restoring and protecting water resources and addressing total maximum daily load (TMDL) program requirements. This approach is intended to implement the requirements of the 1999 Florida Watershed Restoration Act and Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act.

In general, the *Group 2 Basin Status Report, Tampa Bay Tributaries*, which includes the Hillsborough River among others in the region, explains the study methodology. It broadly describes the basin's setting, its water resources, permitted discharges and land uses. It describes historical and current watershed management activities and takes into account those that are proposed. Tables in the report include the existing planning list of potentially impaired waterbodies. Also included is a table of waterbodies and parameters proposed for delisting based on a list of potentially impaired waters from the 1998 planning list that were determined, based on new data, to not currently be impaired. There is also a listing of waters for which there is not enough data to determine water quality status at this time.

The report will be used in identifying waters and parameters needing additional data to verify impairment. It will direct the FDEP's focus on waters needing further study and in its efforts to develop a verified list which will be submitted to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval of the state's Section 303(d) list for the basin in the future.

Tampa Posts Signs to Curb Illegal Dumping Along River

Illegal Dumping: *It's quick....It's easy....And it doesn't cost anything.*

Two out of three isn't bad. If you are thinking about getting rid of that old ugly couch, disposing of some old tires, or are just too lazy to put your trash out curb-side, then dumping may be for you. But be warned: it's illegal. And the City of Tampa is clamping down on those areas where such activities take place and one of those areas is along the Hillsborough River. After 15 years of cleaning up the river City officials know its a problem. More than 5 tons of trash and debris have been collected each year and yet the problem persists. Not that it wasn't a crime before, but now the City is taking a more proactive approach by posting signs in areas where dumping has been a persistent problem. Temporary signs are posted in hopes that they will serve as a deterrent, a reminder that "trashing" the river, or anywhere for that matter, is not only illegal but it does have a cost. The cost of cleaning up dumped trash is enormous. Depending on what the materials are it can also have an environmental cost on top of the dollars it takes to send a crew out to pick this stuff up....and no, they aren't community service workers doing their time....they are City workers on the clock, your clock, when they could be doing something else for the community. Illegal dumping has another costly effect, the effect of lowering property values, the desirability of people to want to live nearby to such areas. It also costs us all from the aesthetic standpoint of spoiling a perfectly beautiful river/neighborhood/community to, be looked at, enjoyed, and proud of. Illegal dumping takes away our pride, our self-worth, despoils our water, threatens/harms wildlife and just is plain nasty. So if you observe some one dumping, turn them in. And one word for those that would dump illegally: **DON'T !**



Hillsborough River Management Challenges Reflect Divergent Surroundings

UPPER - The upper Hillsborough River, located upstream of Fletcher Avenue, is relatively undeveloped and the uses that are located in this portion of the river corridor are passive recreational park sites or other recreational areas that feature the river and the natural environment in some way or are enhanced by the river's proximity. Much of the land in this portion of the river corridor is under public control through ownership by the state, Southwest Florida Water Management District, and county.



MIDDLE - Uses along the middle or suburban portion of the river corridor, between Fletcher Avenue and the City of Tampa dam, are primarily residential in nature with public park spaces interspersed. Urban encroachment along this part of the river has resulted in a number of water quality concerns and impacts



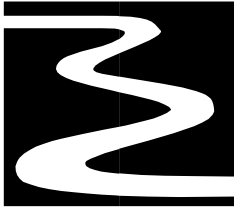
to wildlife and its habitat have occurred with the influx of residences and human activity. Changes to the river corridor have been most dramatic in this area of the river and demonstrates the strong attraction and value the community holds for riverfront living.



LOWER - The lower river, downstream of the dam, is urbanized. This portion of the river has the most density of uses found along its shoreline, most notably downtown Tampa. A mix of residential, commercial and public uses can be found along this part of the river. Impacts to this part of the river are long-standing and have reduced its natural functions. Still, public spaces along the river are held as important community gathering places and it provides a pleasing backdrop for many community functions.

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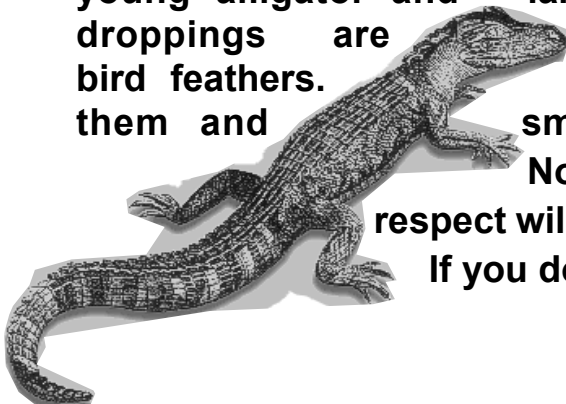
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A WISE ADVISORY-

The Florida State Department of Fish and Wildlife is advising hikers, hunters, fishers, and golfers to take extra precautions and keep alert for alligators this spring. They advise people to wear noise-producing devices such as little bells on their clothing to alert but not startle the alligators unexpectedly. They also advise the carrying of pepperspray in case of an encounter with an alligator. It is also a good idea to watch for fresh signs of alligator activity. People should recognize the difference between small young alligator and large adult alligator droppings. Young alligator droppings are smaller and contain fish bones and possibly bird feathers. Adult alligators droppings have little bells in them and smell like pepper spray .



Now You know. Always be cautious in the wild,
respect wildlife and try not to disturb them in their habitats.
If you don't, some may come back to bite you!