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A PUBLICATION OF THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CITY-COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

RIVER NEWS

Serving Tampa, Temple Terrace and Hillsborough County

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Hillsborough River Environmental Litter Patrol



Trash Out of Hand Pollutes River/Community

LITTER- It has become more and more prevalent in and along the Hillsborough River. Its in our streets, clogging storm drain-ways, strewn on and along sidewalks, and in our parks and yards. The 16th Annual Hillsborough River & Waterway Clean Up event, held in November 2003, netted over 10-tons of trash and debris out of and along the river. Ten tons is an indication of the disconnect between those that litter and their understanding of the impacts to the natural environment, the cost of collecting this thoughtless clutter, and a diminishing community self-image.

We aren't talking about just a few small pieces of trash here and there. Discarded mattresses, bicycles, lawn equipment and lots and lots of plastics were collected, including drinking cups, straws, bottles and childrens' toys. Shopping carts seem to have a natural

attraction to the river for some reason and there were plenty of the newer, plastic models from an assortment of retailers all along and in the river found during this most recent clean up. There was plenty of glass and paper scooped up as well. Fast-food wrappers/containers were everywhere. But those who planned and participated in the event did a fine job in making a dent in this otherwise spreading menace.

Litter can kill. Plastic rings that hold together a six-pack of beverages has been known to entangle and strangulate wildlife. Discarded monofilament fishing line is a prime river-related kind of litter that endangers wildlife, especially fish, manatees, and birds. Ingestion of plastics, foils and other materials found littering most anywhere in our community poses a danger. Some of it takes years to decompose. Some of it never will.

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TAC Meets to Take Up Issues

TAC Meeting Summaries

The TAC met on November 18th at the Southwest Florida Water Management District Tampa Service Office. Among discussion/reports at the meeting were:

: A briefing regarding the establishment of a minimum flow for Sulphur Springs.

A briefing regarding the operation of the City of Temple Terrace Broadway storm water outfall project and analysis of data collected pertaining to the effectiveness of the CDS unit (continuous deflection and separation unit) that is part of that storm water treatment system.

Consideration of seven (7) Tampa Port Authority Minor Work Permit Applications.

A report on recent Hillsborough River levels.

Reports and discussion on community outreach projects including the City of Tampa Mayor's 16th Annual Hillsborough River & Waterways Clean Up held on Saturday, November 22nd, and an educational brochure for community youth, focused on the effects of pollution on the river.

The December 16th TAC meeting was held at the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County in Ybor City. Among discussion/reports at the meeting were:

A briefing on Lowry Park Zoo expansion plans that could include a storm water outfall to the river.

A briefing/discussion on existing and future river front trails.

Consideration of two (2) Tampa Port Authority Minor Work Permit Applications.

A report on recent Hillsborough River Levels.

An update report on River Board/TAC outreach projects including the educational brochure being developed by the TAC.

A wrap-up report on the November Hillsborough River Clean Up.

All 2004 TAC meeting will be held in the 2nd floor conference room of the Tampa Union Train Station, 601 N. Nebraska Avenue, Tampa, unless otherwise noticed. Meetings begin at 1:30 p.m. To review River Board and TAC agendas visit our website at www.hillsboroughriver.org and click on *Agendas* under the River Board/TAC logo or contact staff at 273-3774, extension 323.

District to Hear Recommendations on Sulphur Springs Minimum Flow

The Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District will be presented with a recommendation regarding the establishment of a minimum flow for Sulphur Springs at its January meeting. Studies have been on-going to predict the impacts that would result when spring flow is partially or completely diverted.

Sulphur Spring has a flow rate around 20 million gallons per day. Historically, flow from the springs augments the Hillsborough River by flowing out of the spring, through a lagoon area and into the river. In times of drought, the City of Tampa has diverted the spring's water to the reservoir to augment Tampa's water supply. Recently, the City of Tampa has been successful in diverting variable rates of spring water to the reservoir or to a flume near the face of the dam and releasing it there to flow downstream. The City is also now able to re-circulate water coming out at the spring, oxygenating the water which improves the quality of the water being released to the river. The flume also improves the oxygen level in the water released into the river in that manner.

Primary scientific criteria studied in formulating a recommendation regarding the spring's minimum flow were changes in salinity levels in the lagoon and river and effects to temperature in the vicinity of the spring in response to variable flow rates. Manatee use and needs were taken into account as well.

The Governing Board will be presented a staff recommendation based on the studies conducted. The recommendation, studies and data will be forwarded for independent peer review. The peer review panel will review the District conclusions and make a recommendation back to the District. Following that review process, the District can take action to adopt a minimum for Sulphur Spring.

River Flows Diminish With Less Rain

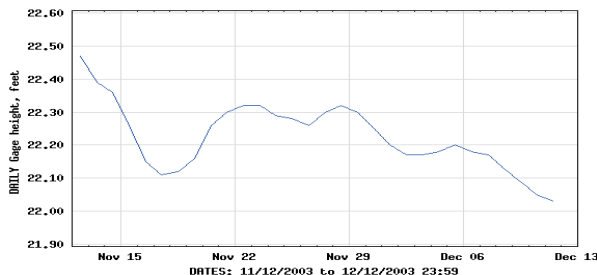
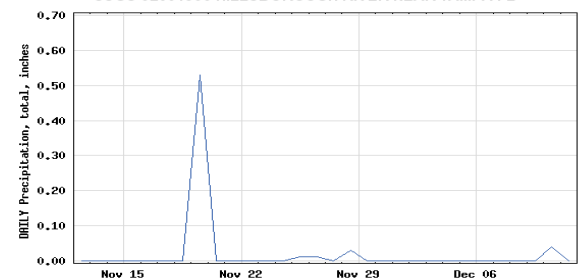
The Hillsborough River water levels, upstream of the dam, have been relatively stable over the past few months. Controlled releases from the reservoir, to allow study of limited freshwater inflows into the lower river, have been on-going with variable amounts released within certain time periods. Flow from Sulphur Springs has been constant and allowed to flow into the lower river. Rainfall over the last couple of months has been spotty. Rainfall totals from mid-November to mid-December were less than 1 inch.

A review of reservoir data shows an expected decline in water level. The lack of rainfall and dependance on the river as a water supply are the two main factors for the decreasing water levels. Cooler weather should help in reducing the demand for water for use in irrigating vegetation so hopefully the water stored in the reservoir can be sufficient to meet the need.

With a limited water supply and continued dry weather more than likely ahead for the next few month ahead, these conditions only serve to accentuate the need to continue to practice and promote water conservation at all times. Do YOUR part...conserve water.

USGS

USGS 02304500 HILLSBOROUGH RIVER NEAR TAMPA FL



DATES: 11/12/2003 to 12/12/2003 23:59

Litter, from page 1

Styrofoam, which takes many forms, never really goes away, so it is a constant challenge to remove permanently from the natural environment.

Recently, a more serious kind of litter was discovered near the Columbus Avenue bridge. Medical waste in the form of hypodermic needles were found deposited in and around the river en masse. Fortunately, it was determined this medical waste posed no detectable adverse water quality impacts or threat to wildlife this time, but by their being dumped in the river, these needles certainly could



have injured someone as they washed ashore.

There are several important reasons not to litter or direct yard debris, trash, or other impediments into storm drain systems including street gutters and vegetated ditches or swales. Four primary reasons are:

●**Flooding:** Blockage of storm water drainways impedes the intended movement of rainwater away from an area in which rainfall is received. This can result in water backing up and flooding areas that would otherwise not be impacted. Storm water conveyance systems are designed to remove anticipated normal rainfall but are unable to do so if blocked or clogged which can result in flooding.

●**Water Quality:** Water quality impacts resulting from various forms of pollution are not often immediately realized. Littering and the disposal of vegetative materials such as yard clippings and other vegetation into a waterway not only block water movement but the natural decomposition process of such materials can result in the release of nutrients, compounds and chemicals into the receiving waterbody. The decomposition process requires oxygen so another result can be the depletion of suspended oxygen in the receiving waterbody. This can result in a chain reaction such as a fish kill that further affects water quality. The disposing of "just a little bit of yard materials" from thousands of yards via storm water systems results in tons of "natural" pollutants that would not otherwise be directed to our waterways. This cumulative pollution impact is difficult to quantify but is clearly avoidable. Another consideration to note is that many people believe storm water is treated prior to being deposited into a receiving waterbody such as a river, lake or bay. This is more often not the case. Most storm water treatment is directed towards removal of suspended solids through limited screening and/or nutrients and chemicals through settling ponds/vegetated swales and ditches. They are not built or designed to remove large amounts of materials or to facilitate the movement of large items.

●**Public Health:** The public should be aware that blockage of storm water systems increases a number of health and safety hazards. Standing water can promote the propagation of mosquitoes that can carry

life-threatening diseases to humans and animals.

●**Public Safety:** Standing water poses a threat to public safety. It can obscure hazards such as the location of ditches and open holes or other obstructions that are covered by standing water to foot and vehicular traffic. This is particularly important in relation to vehicular operation.

●**Public Expense:** Storm water conveyance systems were never intended nor designed to be used as a waste disposal system. The improper depositing of yard debris, trash and other items into public storm water conveyance systems can result in the unnecessary expenditure of public tax dollars to repeatedly clean these systems out. It is the responsibility of each property owner to properly dispose of yard debris, trash or other items using available waste management services that are permitted and properly operated. The reliance on storm water conveyance systems as a waste disposal system results in additional maintenance, adding to the taxpayers' burden of funding the trash removal for others due to their misuse of public storm water conveyance systems.

NEVER Litter. NEVER place petroleum products, paints or other chemicals in drain systems.

●**Keep gutters, grates and other drainage ways clear of debris and trash.**

●**Sweep up grass clippings and pick up limbs/branches and dispose of any yard materials using approved waste management services. If you have a maintenance service, insist these materials be removed properly.**

●**Report blocked drainage ways or remove the blockage if safely possible.**

●**Report observing dumping of materials in drainways to your local storm water management, code enforcement, or solid waste departments or environmental regulatory agency.**

● The three jurisdictions along the river, Tampa, Temple Terrace and Hillsborough County, have been or are starting to install new anti-pollution devices to help clean the river. This is not inexpensive nor an excuse to allow littering or pollution of any kind to spoil one of our most important water supply sources, recreational assets, wildlife corridor and aesthetic amenity.

While we all work to improve the river's water quality and appearance, think about starting your own Hillsborough River Environmental Litter Patrol. If you



live along the river or visit the river and see any trash or debris, pick it up and dispose of it properly. Lets start a new trend for the new year and show appreciation for the Hillsborough River and natural surroundings that we all share!

YOUR River Board wants to hear from YOU! Call the River Hotline at 272-5940



RIVER NEWS

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Change Service Requested

A Bird to the wise... Every litter-bit hurts.

