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A PUBLICATION OF THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CITY-COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

RIVER NEWS

Serving Tampa, Temple Terrace and Hillsborough County

BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Could Dwindling Water Resources Bring Back Wellfield Pumping?



Over the last four months of 2006, the southwest region of Florida experienced unusually warm weather conditions with minimal rainfall. The few cold fronts, usually preceded by rainy weather, came to the state with narrow bands of rain that lasted for short duration and produced little if

any meaningful rainfall. This is coming on the heels of a rainfall deficit last year of around 15 inches. Because of the rainfall shortfall and persistent warm weather conditions, water demand has been up significantly for this time of year.

The City of Tampa depends on the Hillsborough River system for most of its water supply but has found itself short this winter and had to buy over a million dollars of water from Tampa Bay Water. A portion of that water was extracted from the Tampa By-Pass Canal and the Hillsborough River. Withdrawals from the river reservoir in Tampa dipped to just 19', a low for the reservoir that normally is kept at maximum capacity of 22.5'. There has been no downstream over-flow at the dam from the reservoir since early October, 2006 and things aren't looking promising for a downstream flow to resume anytime soon. A significantly lowered river level has been observed in the Temple Terrace area, leaving portions of the river in that community impassable by boat and showing more shoreline than residents care to see.

Since there is no controlling natural forces that could bring rains to the area to relieve the current water crunch and Tampa Bay Water's reservoir is being depleted faster than anticipated and no new technology such as a workable desalination plant is available to save us from our water gluttony, there is but one solution water suppliers may be forced to turn back to: groundwater pumping. While expanding the water supply arsenal to include groundwater sources isn't ideal, running out of water is even less appealing to most area residents.

Still, greater efforts towards water conservation at a personal level, enforcement of water restrictions by local governments/agencies and increasing the price of water as a means to provide an incentive to save water should be seriously contemplated.

As they say in the movie *Back to the Future*, "If you put your mind to it you can accomplish anything." It is time we get started moving forward to solve our water supply issues that provides reliable sources while protecting the environment.

A consolidated city-county agency serving the cities of Tampa, Plant City, Temple Terrace and unincorporated Hillsborough County

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New Appointees to River Board



Councilwoman
Fernandez

Temple Terrace Council member Alison Fernandez became a resident of Temple Terrace in 1972. She attended local schools, starting with Temple Terrace Elementary and graduating from King High School. She later graduated from Florida State University with Bachelor of Science degrees in Accounting and Finance. She worked as an auditor for KPMG Peat Marwocick, LLC.

Ms. Fernandez is active in the Temple Terrace Junior Woman's Club, the Lewis Elementary PTA and the Temple Terrace Soccer Association. She was elected to the City Council on Nov. 7, 2006.



Hillsborough County Commissioner Al Higginbotham was born in Plant City and has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Florida. Having suffered an accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down and since recovering from his physical limitations, Higginbotham staunchly advocates on behalf of persons with disabilities.

After serving as chair of the Hillsborough County Republican Party for three years, Higginbotham was elected to the County Commission in 2006. He previously owned a real estate brokerage firm, and has been an activist for agricultural, political and faith-based causes.



Commissioner
Higginbotham

New Mural Graces Rowlett Park

A brand new mural at Rowlett Park, depicting the lives of single women in the Tampa community, is now complete. The mural is proudly displayed on the east-facing hand ball court wall. Stretching upwards of 20 feet, the figures and images included in the mural chronicle the life of single women and their children. The project was designed and carried out by students in the Sulphur Springs neighborhood through the *Community Stepping Stones* Project. Stop by and enjoy this unique artwork!



TAC Covers River Issues at January Meeting

The Technical Advisory Council (TAC) met at the Tampa Union Train Station January 16, 2006. Among discussion items and reports made at the meeting were:

- The TAC selected Robert Carnahan, Jr., as 2007 Chair and Pete Owens as 2007 Vice-Chair.
- The TAC was briefed on the minimum flow process status for the lower river.
- The TAC discussed responses from the District and Tampa Bay Water in asking for clarification pertaining to the inclusion of funding for a future augmentation project and other water project-related issues.
- A briefing on local comprehensive plan updates as they pertain to the Hillsborough River.
- Review and approval of three Tampa Port Authority Minor Work Permit applications for projects along the river.
- Review and discussion regarding low water levels in the river in response to minimal rainfall over the past several months.
- A briefing on Temple Terrace Police Department's river hazard navigation map, available on line at http://www.templeterrace.com/river/RiverHazardsMAP_11106.pdf.
- A status report on riverfront property nominated to the Environment Lands Acquisition and Protection Program by the River Board and TAC.



TAC meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month. All TAC meetings are held at the Tampa Union Train Station, 601 N. Nebraska Avenue, Tampa, second floor meeting room unless otherwise noticed. TAC 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.

BE A RIVER VALENTINE
LOVE THE RIVER...
CONSERVE WATER!

Why Water Conservation CAN Help in Achieving a Meaningful Minimum Downstream Flow

Just think. When the citizens in Tampa are limited to one day watering their yards the water savings realized is somewhere around 15 million gallons per day. That just goes to show where the bulk of the water from the reservoir is used, like it or not. We aren't drinking it all.

A very good question might be why do the water suppliers, particularly the City of Tampa, ever allow using potable, drinkable water for irrigation? Well, there are two primary reasons; the city piping system connects pretty much solely to the potable water supply and most importantly, you pay for this water. Not big bucks, but enough to make water sales in Tampa very profitable.



So this is why there won't be any freshwater from the reservoir used to augment the lower Hillsborough River's minimum flow. It seems ironic that the water managers and many politicians just won't acknowledge the economic value of having a river that is alive downstream of the dam.

I've heard local decision-makers say that the minimum flow should be left up to scientists to evaluate and set and yet in the same breath say it is too important to protect the public water supply and none of the river's water can be released for a minimum flow. A tangle of contradictions. The last time a minimum flow was set for the lower river it was based little on science and mostly on political pressure and maneuvering, denying the lower any new freshwater. Not a good way to end an arduous process.

The degradation of the Hillsborough River to the point it is today took many years. Unintended consequences of cutting the river in half with a dam likely had the largest impact. Growth in the area resulting in higher water demands also strains the river. Recently, signs of strain upstream in the Temple Terrace area started to become apparent with extreme low water levels. But no portion of the river has borne the brunt of abuse as the river downstream of the dam. Go look at it. It is mired, littered and at times smelly. It flows upstream during high tide, turning the murky river into a backwater that Nature never intended. Riverfront owners don't find it attractive. A dirty, fouled river lowers the value of the community in many ways. Economically, visually and ecologically. Finding the water and a way to have a meaningful minimum flow must be our goal, not just settling on a number.

MINIMAL RAINFALL CONTINUES WATER SHORTAGE IN AREA



Rainfall in December through early February was scant, measuring about a half inch, leaving the river with little water to soak up and use. Flow at the dam remained constant at zero. The lack of

flow to the lower river from upstream has persisted now for four months, nearly a third of a year. Water demand continues to put a damper on the river's ability to recover and for the reservoir to reach the point where it is full.

Weather patterns, particularly the El Nino effect that would typically generate some wintertime rainfall for our area, have shifted or dissipated to a point where they no longer produce rain for us. While little rainfall fell, what did fall came in places that would not benefit the river or its tributaries. It seems that this year the headwaters of the Hillsborough River would be better suited at Tampa International Airport where the most rain was recorded for the time period.

Monitoring the river flows and levels this time of year indicate a trend of continued decline. The graph showing flow at the dam is flat at zero and has been since early October 2006. Reducing our consumption may help some but rain is what we need. A lot of rain, and soon.

ALLIGATORS SIGHTED IN LOWER RIVER



In search of food or just a sunny spot, alligators have been reported roaming in the river downstream of the dam. One was in the Rowlett Park area and another in the Jean Street Marina vicinity. Both were mid-sized and not acting aggressively.

While many people are wary of alligators in their midst, and we should be cautious, we have to remember we share the environment they depend on too, the river. If you happen to encounter a gator, keep tabs on its movements but there is no need to panic unless it invites you to take part in a meal. Don't be the main course! Use common sense, leave the area and call authorities if you feel threatened.



CONSERVE WATER NOW
KNOW YOUR DAY
LIMIT OUTDOOR WATERING

YOUR River Board wants to hear from YOU! Call the River Hotline at 272-5940 or visit our website at www.hillsboroughriver.org



RIVER NEWS

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Jose Gaspar's Dilemma...2007

Argh Matey....it is time for ye
to take a plunge into the deep
dark Hillsborough.....

But how can I walk the plank in
the Hillsborough River? There
isn't enough water in it to even
drown me proper mate!

