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A PUBLICATION OF THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CITY-COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

RIVER NEWS

Serving Tampa, Temple Terrace and Hillsborough County

DROUGHT GRIPS AREA; WATER SUPPLIES DWINDLE; DISTRICT DECLARES EMERGENCY

Drought conditions gripping the area are having a significant impact to area water resources including the Hillsborough River. On May 18th the Southwest Florida Water Management District issued a water shortage emergency for the Hillsborough River reservoir. Water levels in the reservoir have dropped precariously low due to increased water demand in response to prolonged hot, dry conditions. Other natural water loss such as evaporation is also a factor.

Rainfall is below normal levels by over 10 inches. As of May 10, natural inflow to the reservoir was measured at only 39 cubic feet per second which is only 28 percent of the current average potable water demand. The water level in the reservoir has declined below 18 feet which is extremely low and could pose operational problems if the water level drops much more.

Around the basin conditions are just as dire. In Temple Terrace the river is so low it can be crossed by foot in several places upstream of 56th Street barely



getting your shoes damp. Docks stand high above current water levels and water craft are unusable. Further upstream the river is a remnant of what is can be during the rainy season.

The Hillsborough River is struggling to maintain a flow. Water managers are struggling to assure continued water supply to area residents. It is especially important now to **DO YOUR PART** and **CONSERVE WATER** any way you can. Do it for the river. Do it for you!



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District Prepares to Adopt Minimum Flows for Hillsborough River Segments

The Southwest Florida Water Management (District) Governing Board is poised to adopt minimum flows and levels (mfl) for the lower Hillsborough River, Sulphur Springs, and the Tampa Bypass Canal at its June or July meeting. This action will set in place the minimum amounts of water required in the future to keep these waterways ecologically functioning.

While the mfl for the lower Hillsborough River downstream of the dam will be more than double its current mfl, the solutions put forth to this point to meet this mfl are simply to redirect water that is already in the river system to benefit only one small portion of the lower river between the dam and Sulphur Springs. To do that, water that would normally flow into the river at Sulphur Springs and at the Tampa Bypass Canal into McKay Bay will be reduced. In fact, Tampa Bypass Canal mfl is proposed to be set at zero which doesn't bode well for the aquatic life in the bay that depended on the trickle of water that was allowed to benefit the bay in days gone by when this water way was known as the Palm River. Increased pumping of Sulphur Springs will diminish the beneficial effects on that part of the river where the spring historically fed into the river. Who is going to tell the fish and manatees to swim further upstream to find "nearly fresh" water? Another possible source to help meet the lower river's mfl is directing water from the Blue Sink system. Of course that could diminish subterranean flow towards Sulphur Springs which will already be losing part of its flow. Sinkhole formation due to water withdrawals from Blue Sink is also a serious question to answer before actually carrying out such a plan.

The Tampa area finds itself in desperate times, dependent on unpredictable rain patterns, with a drought period that just won't go away while development is sprouting up everywhere, increasing demands for more water. Shifting waters identified and deemed available that could be used to meet a lower Hillsborough River mfl is a place to start but more needs to be done so that the canal and spring are spared from being further diminished.

The mission of the District is to manage water and related natural resources to ensure their continued availability while maximizing environmental, economic and recreational benefits. Central to the mission is maintaining the balance between the water needs of current and future users while protecting and maintaining water and related natural resources which provide the District with its existing and future water supply.

So far what has been proposed makes a choice, a choice to neglect the Hillsborough River downstream of Sulphur Springs, to ignore the river upstream of the reservoir and to completely write-off future benefits that could come from the Tampa Bypass Canal to bay waters. Where is the balance? Maybe in the recovery strategy this can all be sorted out. We will all have to wait and see how well we choose.

RAIN SHORTFALL and HOT TEMPS ADD TO AREA WATER SHORTAGE

A rainy day. Remember what that was like? Well the memory has probably faded somewhat over the past nine months since the river basin has not experienced a good soaking. Its true, there have been some sprinkles over that period of time but they barely moved dust and contributed nothing that could be construed as to helping increased flows in the river or its tributaries.

Hillsborough River basin tributaries that normally provide relatively significant flows have been measuring at well below historic average flow rates for this time of year. Even Crystal Springs which provides the base flow to the river for much of the year is flowing at a reduced rate.

All these factors have set the stage for greatly reduced water supply from the river and has caused the City of Tampa to purchase water from Tampa Bay Water to make up the difference between what the river can yield in this dry period and higher than ever demands for water by the City's water customers.

A recent trip through Temple Terrace showed exposed shorelines and small islands cropping up out of the water in many places where the river waters have receded. Docks tower over the river, practically useless except for gazing out over the low waters below. Rock shoals jut upward just below the water line making the river impassible and dangerous for water craft. Birds on the other hand are enjoying a smorgasbord of fish easily stalked and eaten in the river's shallow waters.

This dry season will end. Mid-June is just around the corner when the rains are supposed to become an everyday event. The lakes, tributaries and river will revive and flow over the dam may even be a possibility at some point if enough rains come. Groundwater levels will improve too to help augment the river, to help it swell back to a river that is vibrant, alive and moving towards the bay. I can't wait to hear one day soon when someone says to me, "Gosh, I am so tired of these rainy days. They are so gloomy." I'll be thinking back to now and how gloomy river conditions are and what a welcome relief it will be to go outside and get soaking wet.



Know your day or you will pay. No warnings for illegal watering. Check your local watering restrictions on Tampa, Temple Terrace and Hillsborough County web sites or call your local water department.

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



River Board Meeting Summary

The River Board met at the Tampa Union Train Station May 11, 2007. Among discussion items and reports made at the meeting were:

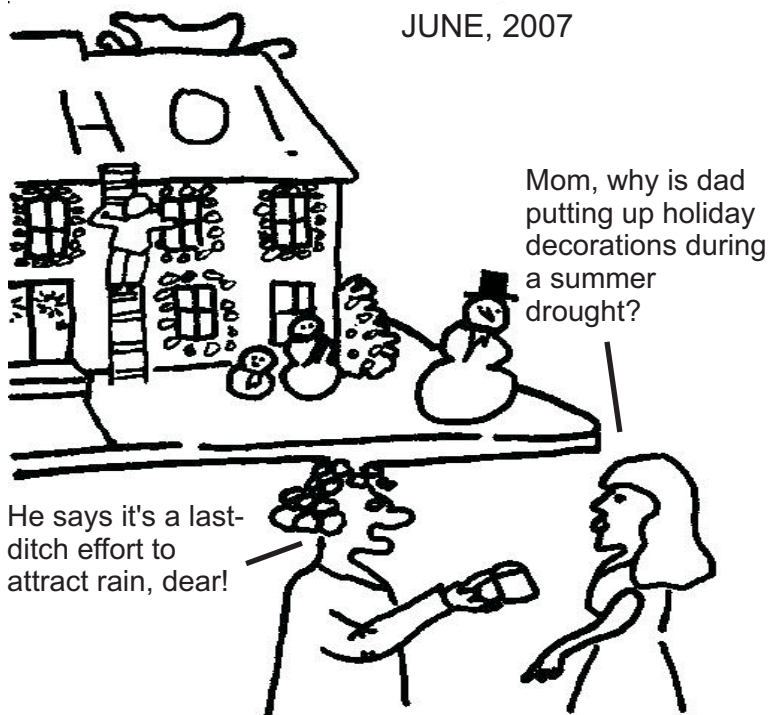
- A discussion of the TAC recommendation to send a letter to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) regarding the proposed lower Hillsborough River minimum flow. The River Board directed the letter be sent by the TAC.
- Discussions the TAC have been holding regarding concurrency as it relates to water resource availability
- A briefing on City of Temple Terrace River Watch Task Force. This citizens' task force is exploring ways for Temple Terrace to gain a voice in the river's management, policy development and operation. The task force has met with SWFWMD officials on two occasions to discuss issues.
- A demonstration of Flexi-Pave Porous Surface Systems, an alternative, porous paving materials that can be used in place of concrete or other non-porous paving material.
- Discussion and support of 14 Tampa Port Authority Minor Work Permit Applications as recommend by the TAC.
- An update on Hillsborough River flows and levels.
- A presentation on area Greenways/Trails and Blueways efforts.
- The opening of Sulphur Springs River Tower Park to the public on a daily basis.
- Discussion and support of a TAC recommendation regarding manatee protection status that would object to the downlisting of manatees from endangered to threatened species.
- An update regarding the deployment of a de-pollution craft in the Hillsborough River.
- An update report on a River Board nominated ELAPP site in Hillsborough County.

TAC Covers River Issues at January Meeting

The Technical Advisory Council (TAC) met at the Tampa Union Train Station May 15, 2007. Among discussion items and reports made at the meeting were:

- The TAC was updated on various minimum flows and levels processes underway by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) for the lower Hillsborough River, the Tampa By-Pass Canal, Sulphur Springs and the upper Hillsborough River.
 - The TAC was briefed by SWFWMD staff on the intent and implementation of concurrency and how this relates to water resource management, availability and protection.
 - The TAC was briefed on meetings held with Temple Terrace residents regarding the Hillsborough River's management within that community and their concerns about low/high water conditions that occur in that part of the river.
 - The TAC was briefed on a rezoning in the Temple Crest neighborhood in Tampa in relation to stormwater treatment/attenuation and potential impacts to surrounding property owners and the Hillsborough River.
 - The TAC reviewed and supported two Tampa Port Authority minor work permit applications to forward to the River Board.
 - Status Report on Recent Hillsborough River Levels
 - The TAC was briefed on continued low water conditions in the river that persist mainly due to lack of rainfall.
 - The lack of rainfall was shown to be the primary reason for continued low water conditions in the river. There has been no flow over the dam since October 4, 2006.
- 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.

JUNE, 2007



The Planning Commission's 25th Annual Community Awards Program included recognition of the River Board & TAC long-time staff, Alan Wright. Also known as Mr. River, Alan's service to the River Board, TAC and community was highlighted with river-related projects that he was involved with such as river clean ups, shoreline restoration projects, riverfront

acquisitions, manatee protection and many other efforts directed toward the improvement and protection of the Hillsborough River corridor. While being a part of all of these projects and programs over 20 years, Mr. River acknowledges the people responsible for helping to make the river a better place, the communities that live, work and play along its banks. Here's to another 20 years!

RIVER NEWS

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BOARDWALK TAKES SHAPE LINKING RIVER TOWER PARK & SULPHUR SPRINGS POOL

If you remember the old song *Under the Boardwalk*, you might want to wander down to the Hillsborough River and see the progress being made to link River Tower and Sulphur Springs Pool Parks. Under the shade of leafy trees along the waterfront this project will allow passage between these two inner-city parks without going out on a roadway. The boardwalk which goes in part under Interstate 275 should encourage safe pedestrian movement and build more use of both these parks.

So, take a hike and experience this new connection for yourself and watch out for the troll under the bridge!