

Hillsborough River Watershed Alliance

Watershed News

January 30, 2009

If you have any environmental news items you would like included in this newsletter, please forward to HRWAFL@verizon.net.

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“Use Water Wisely” PSA Contest Begins Today Students Can Compete For \$1000 Cash Prize

Tampa, FL - The City of Tampa Water Department and Hillsborough County Water Resource Services have officially opened their first “Use Water Wisely” PSA Contest for submissions. Hillsborough County high school students (grades 9 – 12) are encouraged to enter original Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos promoting the importance of protecting our drinking water resources and the Hillsborough River water system. The contest winner will receive a \$1,000 cash prize.

Videos should be 60 seconds in length, or less, and raise the viewer’s awareness by explaining how water is used, the importance of conservation, the dangers of overuse, or exploring sustainable programs which will continue to protect the Hillsborough River and local water resources. Submissions must be postmarked by midnight, March 6, 2009.

Entries will be judged more heavily on creativity, content, and persuasiveness than technical attributes. In addition to the \$1,000 cash prize, the winner and a select number of entries may be

chosen to appear during a 30-minute television program about local water supply issues and the PSA contest.

Contest rules, guidelines, technical criteria, and submission forms are available online at www.tampagov.net/SaveWater. For questions concerning contest criteria, please contact Andrea Roshaven with the City of Tampa Water Department at (813) 274-5912 or Andrea.Roshaven@tampagov.net.

The "Use Water Wisely" PSA contest is jointly sponsored by the City of Tampa Water Department and Hillsborough County Water Resource Services as part of their continuing public education efforts.

Tampa Water Department serves a 211-square mile area with a service population of approximately 645,000 people. The Tampa Water Department's mission is to provide superior drinking water and reclaimed water services to its customers.

Hillsborough County Water Resource Services delivers high-quality drinking water, collects and treats wastewater, and distributes reclaimed water in unincorporated Hillsborough County. The department also coordinates a comprehensive water conservation program and enforces watering restrictions throughout the unincorporated areas.

FWC Records High Counts During Statewide Manatee Survey

A team of scientists counted an all-time-high number of manatees during the annual manatee synoptic survey conducted the week of Jan. 19. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) reported a preliminary count of 3,807 manatees statewide. A team of 21 observers from nine organizations counted 2,153 manatees on Florida's East Coast and 1,654 on the West Coast of the state.

This year's count exceeded the previous high count from 2001 by more than 500 animals. In both years, survey conditions were favorable for aerial observations. Although synoptic results are not population estimates and should not be used to assess trends, the FWC is encouraged by this year's high count. Survey results are consistent with population models that show the manatee population appears to be increasing in Northwest Florida, along the Atlantic Coast and on the upper St. Johns River.

The synoptic survey is a count of manatees over a broad area. The survey provides researchers with a snapshot of manatee distribution and a minimum number of manatees in Florida waters at the time of the count.

Researchers have been conducting synoptic surveys since 1991, weather permitting, to meet the state's requirement for an annual count of manatees in Florida waters. Weather and manatee behavior affect synoptic survey counts. The best conditions for the synoptic survey occur during the coldest months of the year, when manatees gather at warm-water sites.

"Several cold fronts passed through Florida over a short time period, causing a large number of

manatees to move to warm-water sites," said FWRI biologist Holly Edwards. "Good weather conditions allowed the manatees to be easily seen and counted, contributing to this year's high count."

FWRI researchers are testing new survey methods that will provide a population estimate for Florida manatees as outlined in the FWC's manatee management plan. The adjustments to the survey will help achieve more accurate results and reduce dependency on the weather.

For more information about manatees and synoptic surveys, visit <http://research.MyFWC.com>.

To report a dead or injured manatee, call the FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC.

Tampa Bay Estuary Program Water Conservation Notice

In an effort to promote increased water conservation during the ongoing drought, the Southwest Florida Water Management District will bring its water-conserving restroom to several area festivals and events.

The first event will be this weekend's Tampa Bay Black Heritage Festival, which is being held at Al Lopez Park in Tampa.

"The District encourages year-round water conservation," said Melissa Roe, project manager for the District. "But as the region continues to experience a three-year drought, the need to conserve has intensified. The water-conserving restroom station is a practical and effective tool that allows us to go out in the community and share information about what people can do to conserve water during these dry times."

The restroom trailer will also be at the following events:

- Florida State Fair, State Fairgrounds, Tampa, Feb. 5-16
- African American Heritage Celebration, Heritage Village, Largo, Feb. 28
- Master Gardener's Spring Festival, Marion County Extension Service Office, Ocala, March 14-15
- Venice Sharks Tooth Festival, Venice, April 17-19
- Islands Fest, Davis Islands, Tampa, April 18
- Green Thumb Festival, Walter Fuller Park, St. Petersburg, April 25-26
- Mayfaire by the Lake, Polk Museum of Art, Lakeland, May 9-10

Please contact: Robyn Felix at 1-800-423-1476, Ext. 4770 or Cell Phone: 813-781-9817 for more information.

The restroom trailer features the District's current water conservation campaign and Florida-friendly landscaping tips through displays and free materials. It also features six private air-conditioned half baths with water conservation features, running water, lights, mirrors and a bathroom attendant who will keep the stalls clean and stocked.

The main focus of the restroom station, which is a cleaner alternative to some bathrooms found at large events, is water conservation. The restroom trailer uses a water filtration and circulation system, similar to the systems used on airplanes, to reuse the water from the sink drains in the toilet tanks. In addition, the water used in the toilets is filtered and chemically treated then returned to the toilets' tanks. This filtration system allows the water conservation restroom trailer to use just 10 percent of the water needed for a standard restroom trailer.

The water conservation restroom station began as a pilot program in the Pinellas-Anclote River Basin. The project is now funded by all of the Basins within the District, including the Hillsborough River Basin, which includes portions of Hillsborough, Pasco and Polk counties.

For additional information on the drought, water restrictions or water conservation tips, visit the District's web site at WaterMatters.org/drought.

Hillsborough County Pet Waste Study

Through scientific research, pet waste has been shown to be a contributor to water pollution. In urban and highly populated suburban areas, pet waste can be a problem. In order to reduce pollution from this source, Hillsborough County plans to implement a pet waste education program. The program will encourage dog owners to pickup after their pets and dispose of the waste properly. The key to this effort is to develop a habit to ensure pet waste is eliminated as a source of water pollution.

In order to develop a successful pet waste education program, the County desires to receive input from the public on their views and existing habits with their pets. A series of focus groups will be taking place in February. In addition, a short opinion survey is available on the Internet. We ask that the public visit http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=0ScDTZD_2b2Ohkoe7O9KZTHg_3d_3d and fill out the survey.

Polk Transportation Planning Organization Board Meeting Set for February 12th

The Polk Transportation Planning Organization Board, consisting of county and city commissioners throughout Polk County, will meet on Thursday, 9:00 A.M., February 12th at the Neil Combee Administration Building, County Commission Board Room, 1st floor, 330 W. Church St. Bartow. There will be a public hearing for the review and approval of Draft Amendments to the adopted Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which consists of candidate transportation projects that are included as part of Polk County's Federal Economic Stimulus Proposal.

For additional information on the meeting, call the TPO office at (863) 534-6486 or visit their website at www.polktpo.com

District to hold hog hunts at Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve in February

The Southwest Florida Water Management District's Hampton Tract, which is part of the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve, will be the site of hog hunts Feb. 10-13 and Feb.24-27. The tract will be temporarily closed to the public and only permitted hunters will be allowed on the property during these dates. All of the permits for these hunts have been sold.

The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve Hampton Tract's entrance is at the intersection of Rockridge Road and Deen Still Road in Polk County.

The hunt is one of a series of hog hunts being held on District lands in an effort to control the damage being caused to the natural habitats.

The District only allows hogs to be controlled through hunts when the damage they cause is at unacceptable levels, and damage is occurring more frequently and with increasing severity.

Wild hogs live throughout Florida in various habitats, but prefer moist forests and swamps, as well as pine flatwoods. They are omnivorous and feed by rooting with their broad snouts, which can cause extensive damage to the natural habitats. In fact, they can leave an area looking like a plowed field.

Wild hogs are not native to Florida and are believed to have been introduced by explorer Hernando DeSoto as early as 1539. They can weigh more than 150 pounds and travel in herds of several females and their offspring.

Need a summer job?

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Ocala Outdoor Adventure Camp is hiring staff now for its six-week summer camp program.

The overnight camp for boys and girls is located in the Ocala National Forest and begins in June.

"We have limited positions for qualified individuals, including camp counselors, instructors and kitchen staff," said Greg Workman, director of the Ocala Conservation Center and summer youth camp program. "If you enjoy being outdoors and working with children, we want to talk to you."

The positions come with a competitive salary, meals and lodging. Staff is required to live at the camp during the camper sessions.

The primary goal of the camp program is to help children become good, conservation-minded sportsmen and women, and wildlife stewards. They learn these skills and values through fun and educational programs and activities such as fishing, canoeing, swimming, hiking, archery and many other hands-on outdoor activities.

For more information or for registration materials for the summer program, call 352-625-2804 or go to www.OcalaAdventureCamp.com.

Clean Marina Gets 'Wave' of Approval From Lt. Governor

~Lt. Governor Kottkamp and DEP recognize Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club as Clean Marina~

NAPLES – Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp today joined the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Clean Boating Partnership, to recognize the Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club as the 186th member of the Florida Clean Marina Program and the 40th Clean Marina in DEP's South District. With the addition of the Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club, there are nearly 200 Clean Marinas, 30 Clean Boatyards and eight Clean Marine Retailers around the state.

“With more than 1,350 miles of coastline and 50,000 miles of inland and coastal rivers and streams, protecting Florida's precious water resources is crucial,” said Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp. “Waterways are a significant part of Florida's tourism, marine and fishing industries, and the Florida Clean Marina Program is important for not only protecting and preserving, but encouraging environmental education within the marine industry and raising awareness of the importance of environmental stewardship.”

Florida Clean Marina Program facilities are required to meet a variety of best management practices to receive designation. These practices include, but are not limited to, properly storing and disposing of used oil, using fertilizers and pesticides according to directions, and using cleaning methods that prevent the release of pollutants.

The Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club has raised the tide for Clean Marinas by exceeding the 125 environmental measures and Best Management Practices necessary for designation.

“Environmental stewardship has long been a top priority for Hamilton Harbor's developer Collier Enterprises,” said Pat Utter, Vice President of Real Estate for Collier Enterprises. “In addition to meeting the standards of the Clean Marina Program, we've preserved and enhanced some 160 acres of natural wetlands, uplands, and one and one-half miles of mangrove-lined waterfront along our location on the edge of the Rookery Bay.”

Examples of the Marina's going above and beyond include:

- Partnering with the City of Naples to implement a sea grass bed protection program by deepening the channel and installing new channel markers and signs to help boaters avoid damaging sensitive sea grasses.
- Restoring natural tidal flows through nearby mangrove areas, by designing and building the surrounding seawall to be submerged at high tide.
- Building with IPE lumber – a renewable resource that is naturally fire resistant and does not use toxins or chemicals.
- Implementing an upland fish cleaning station that prevents fish waste and residue from entering the water.
- Designing a filtration system to protect water quality by draining stormwater runoff from streets in surrounding neighborhoods.
- Providing free pumpout services to marina patrons and to the boating public.
- Maintaining its grounds through Xeriscaping and reducing the need for additional irrigation.
- Working with its landscaper to keep water free of grass clippings.

“Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club’s commitment to environmental stewardship is truly commendable and we are proud to welcome this facility to the Florida Clean Marina Program,” said DEP South District Director Jon Iglehart. “The increasing number of marinas becoming designated demonstrates the industry’s commitment to protecting Florida’s waters, for the environmental benefits and also because it makes good business sense.”

The Clean Boating Partnership is a consortium of industry leaders who contribute time and input to the Clean Marina, Clean Boatyard, Clean Marine Retailer and Clean Boater programs which DEP administers to protect Florida’s waterways. The partnership includes DEP, Marine Industries Association of Florida, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, University of Florida Sea Grant Program, United States Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary.

“The Clean Boating Partnership applauds the Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club for its commitment to Florida’s environment,” said the Partnership’s Chair Mark Leslie. “The dedication and hard work in becoming a Clean Marina is an accomplishment this facility can be proud of and we welcome it to our growing Clean Marina family.”

With more than one million registered motorized vessels in Florida, environmental education within marine industries is the first step toward safeguarding the state’s natural resources. By providing “green” education and alternatives, the Florida Clean Marina Program helps ensure a sustainable future for the environment and a billion dollar marine industry. For more information about the Florida Clean Marina Program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/cleanmarina.

DEP’s Office of Sustainable Initiatives is comprised of three voluntary, nonregulatory programs that assist Florida industry and citizens in protecting the environment. The Clean Marina Program, the Florida Green Lodging Program and the Florida Pollution Prevention Program offer a variety of services including onsite assessments, consultations, speakers and workshops, all at no cost to citizens or organizations. The goal of the Sustainable Initiatives programs is to meet the needs of the present population without compromising resources for future generations. To learn more about DEP’s Sustainable Initiatives, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/green.