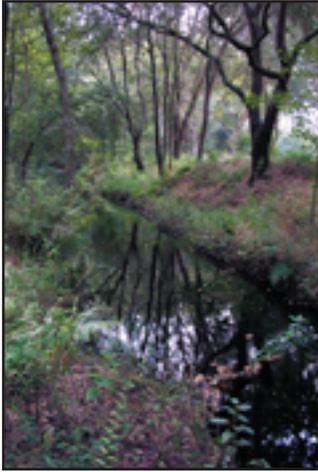


# Buckhorn Creek



Buckhorn Creek in 2003 (USF)



Some of the vegetation near Buckhorn (USF)

*The following narrative comes from an interview with Buckhorn Creek resident Donald Falkenburg on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003. Donald has lived near the creek for over thirty years and has seen many changes in the area during that time.*

## Personal History

Donald Falkenburg moved to his home on Buckhorn Creek thirty-two years ago. He was looking for a home away from the bustle of the quickly developing Brandon area and moved his home to the wilderness off Bloomingdale Avenue. However, in only a matter of a few years development began to move into this area as well.

Despite the growth of the Bloomingdale area, Donald has maintained a home tucked away from the bustle of traffic surrounded by beautiful trees and Buckhorn Creek. At this home he has raised two children.

Today the creek is overgrown with vegetation in many areas and it is up to the residents to keep back the foliage to maintain some access to the creek, and this maintenance is done at their discretion. In some areas the foliage has been completely cleared, but in others it is completely overgrown and the creek remains hidden. Donald notes the county used to maintain the creek:

*“The county used to clean it every year without fail. And then for about four or five years they’ve been saying they don’t do that anymore. Now they say they’re going to do it again... and if the county won’t clean it out, I just do it myself. In the thirty years I’ve been here I’ve had to clean it about three times, so that’s not so bad. It’ll flow regardless.”*

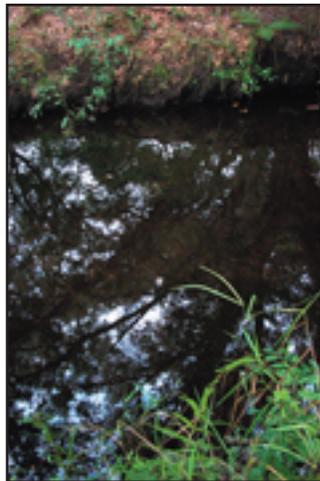
Near Donald’s home the creek runs parallel to the road. When Donald first moved to Buckhorn Creek this prevented him from accessing his property from Bloomingdale Avenue. Donald remembers:

*“And when I first moved here of course there was no road in, you had to come in through the back. For about 10-15 years we drove around. So my neighbor and I, we put in a culvert. We got together and did that and it’s been a lot easier to get in and out. Especially with Bloomingdale; there’s so much traffic.”*

In fact, those 6-foot culverts are the star in a favorite story of Donald’s. Donald explains:



*Along the banks of Buckhorn Creek in 2003 (USF)*



*Buckhorn Creek in 2003 (USF)*

*“I used to have a fence that went around the front of my property, and I let a guy use it to put cows in, and it included the creek. Well, his cows started getting out. He couldn’t find out where they were getting out. Finally, he sat back in the woods, because they wouldn’t do it [get out] while he was watching. So, he snuck out in the woods and watched them. And they were going down in the creek through the culvert and out. They’d climb up and be grazing on the other side. We had to put a line up to keep them in.”*

## **History/Information**

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Buckhorn Creek is located in the Alafia River watershed. Its headwaters are in Bloomingdale, and it empties into the Alafia River. It has two segments and is 20,297 feet in length ([www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org](http://www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org)). Buckhorn creek currently flows through a subdivision, along Bloomingdale Avenue, through several neighborhoods, and then down to the Alafia.

According to Donald, the creek has not changed in the years he has lived along Buckhorn Creek. The creek itself is the same, as well as the vegetation around the creek. Donald comments:

*“It flows all year, and it gets down to just a few inches deep in the dry season, but it still flows... There’s a lot of vegetation around the creek, and it’s always been that way, I haven’t noticed a change.”*

Donald has also seen a variety of fish that have frequented the creek over the years. Donald notes:

*“Yeah there are all kinds of fish. Mullet, you know, don’t come up this far, but they do come up as far as the mouth of the creek, but they don’t come up the creek for some reason. You know they’re primarily a saltwater fish. But I see little small fish mainly.”*

While the creek supports a small amount of natural activity it is not big enough to support much human activity. Donald explains:

*“I suppose if you had a garden you could pump water out and use it for your garden, but it’s not big enough to canoe in, and the fish aren’t big enough to make it worth while. There is probably a lot of catfish.”*

This section of Buckhorn Creek has been the site of several floods in the past. Donald experienced many of these occasions in the years he has lived here. Donald comments:

*“We’ve had numerous floods out here from the creek... it would be alright and in a real heavy rain it would start to overflow and just cover the property. There was a car I had for sale at the time [of the flooding], and I had a For Sale sign in the window, and it was there one afternoon and it*



*Flooding on the Creek in the 1980s (Falkenburg)*



*A car affected by Buckhorn Creek flooding in the mid-1980s (Falkenburg)*



*High creek water in the 1980s (Falkenburg)*

*was raining, and the next morning it was flooded. That's how quick- overnight, millions of gallons. Well, it used to. It doesn't anymore. .... It comes in right around the tip of Hidden Lake [subdivision]. Hidden Lake, if it overflows into the swamp back here, it dumps into Buckhorn Creek and goes on out."*

The developing area brought many changes to the area surrounding Buckhorn Creek, including changes that helped to relieve the flooding problem. Donald explains:

*"It hasn't flooded now in several years because they dug a water impoundment reservoir behind [the supermarket]. And it just sort of flushes in there and doesn't come up here like this picture."*

## **Development**

The area surrounding Buckhorn Creek has been steadily growing since Donald moved to the area and there is increasing development in the area. Growth in the area will have an effect on the creek, but the repercussions are still being realized.

Donald moved to the creek to escape the bustle of change, but it soon followed him to the area. Donald remembers:

*"I moved from Falkenburg Road to here because it was becoming too commercialized. I moved out here to get out of the peopling and the traffic, and it moved in here after just a few years."*

Donald has two views on how development is affecting the creek. He has his own experiences with the creek, and he has the impressions of other residents. Donald comments:

*"There's been surprisingly little trash. I mean I've been down the whole creek and I've never noticed anything bad... but my doctor tells me it's polluted up where he lives... he says it smells bad, but I've never noticed a smell up here."*

The most significant change to the area as a result of the developing area has been the changes affecting the amount of water flowing through the area. Donald attributes this change to the construction of a local supermarket:

*"[A supermarket] was built down here, and it used to be a floodplain. When it got high it would flood out into the area, about 15-acres, and soak in over two or three days. But then [the supermarket] put in a parking lot, a big one, and they fixed it so the creek would flow on through."*

## The Future

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*Flooded Buckhorn Creek in the mid-1980s  
(Falkenburg)*

The area surrounding Buckhorn creek continues to grow and develop. The affects of these changes will continue to shape the condition of the creek. Donald feels that these changes are inevitable, but that in the end, the creek is more powerful than human development:

*“The developing area will definitely affect the creek. I don’t know how they could plug it up, or I don’t know what they’ll do. You can’t stop it, believe me. When it rains hard, it looks like the Alafia River coming through here. And there’s no way to stop that... No, I don’t think it will ever be stopped or changed a whole lot. Now the county may come in and widen it or clean it. And that would help the water flow of course. But as it stands it does a pretty good job.”*

**Written By: Alexis Broadbent-Sykes**