

# Lake Josephine Narrative

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The following narrative is based on an interview with Joanne Spurlino in her home on Lake Josephine on June 18, 1998. The interview provided information, which combined with survey, biological assessment, and other agency's data illustrates the past, present, and future trends of the lake.

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## Joanne Spurlino

Joanne Spurlino and her husband Cy are relative new comers to the Odessa lake environment. After spending several years looking for property on which to build that would be close to the airport, yet encompass a degree of country living, they chose a site on Lake Josephine. Joanne is the Lakewatch monitor for Lake Josephine, her involvement motivated by a, "...concern about the environment ... and the general use of the land around here. I enjoy being out in the country and that's why I'm here".

## Lake Josephine



Lake Josephine is a 51-acre lake located in the Northwest Hillsborough Basin. The lake belongs to a chain of four interconnecting lakes, the other three being Lake Pretty and Lake Armistead to the west and south and Rock Lake to the north and east. Rocky Creek flows into Rock Lake and a portion of Rocky Creek joins the two lakes on the east side of Josephine. The interconnectedness of

the lakes and the resulting exchange of water among them has the potential to affect the health and quality of each lake in the chain rather than isolating the effects, positive or negative, to just one.

The shores of Lake Josephine support single family residential development as well as patches of agriculture and pasture, acting as visual reminders of the area's rural past. The shoreline remains rimmed by cypress trees which contribute to the tea-color of the water stemming from the tannic acids released by such vegetation. Some residents, like Joanne, have embarked on a revegetation campaign to reintroduce native aquatic vegetation to the shores of the lake, an endeavor holding many potential benefits for the lake's health.

Lake Josephine is home to a diverse wildlife population, although the diversity has been declining with the increase of development. Wild boar, deer, and



Examples of Joanne's efforts to revegetate the shoreline with native aquatic plants

otter used to be active parts of the wildlife population and are rarely if ever seen any more. The lake still supports various species of fish, ducks and wading birds in addition to alligators, snakes, turtles, frogs and the omnipresent selection of small land based animals.

## Development

The shoreline of Lake Josephine supports approximately 20 residences, many on good-sized lots set back from the shore. Some of the lots have agriculture and wetlands on them in addition to the indigenous cypress further contributing a natural look to this lake's environment.



Some lake front land still is maintained for agricultural and pasture use

In the recent past, Lake Josephine, like the rest of Odessa, has been affected by an increase in development. Particularly the Van Dyke Farms development located to the north west of Lake Josephine has affected the character of the lake. The development began approximately 10 years ago and has not yet maximized its building capacity. The development has its own sewage and water and abutts Rocky Creek which flows directly into Rock Lake which then flows into Lake Josephine.

## The Future

The negative effects on the quality of Lake Josephine instigated by increasing development has been mediated to some degree by good-sized lots and residents who value the natural environment provided by the lake. Joanne's efforts with Lakewatch provide an example of beneficial lake behavior that can enhance the already positive actions existing on Lake Josephine and help to assure a healthy lake for the future.