

Lake Hobbs Narrative

The following narrative is based on an interview with Steve Tanski in his home on Lake Hobbs in September 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.

Steve Tanski



Steve Tanski, Lakewatch
Volunteer and Oral History
Informant

Steve moved to Lake Hobbs in 1988 from a home in Carrollwood. His friend's grandmother lives on the lake and he had the opportunity to come out to Lake Hobbs to fish and, "saw how nice it was". On a Sunday morning, he picked up the paper, read about the property, and was the first person to call and put his money down.

Steve feels his property is optimal. It faces due West and he has a view of the sun setting over the lake. Most of the houses around Lake Hobbs are set back from the lakeshore, so his view encompasses a natural looking shoreline.

Lake Hobbs is the outlet for Steve's interest in fishing and boating. "I've always liked the outdoors...I like to fish so that's why I wanted to get on the lake. Plus I wanted some investment property". In addition to activities on the lake, Steve has acted as the president for the Lake Organization and volunteers for Lakewatch data gathering.

Lake Hobbs

Lake Hobbs is a 60-acre lake in the Northwest



photo by: SWFWMD

Hillsborough basin. Steve comments, "It's nice, it's a beautiful lake...one of the clearest lakes around...I've talked to people ...[that have] flown over and they say it looks ...blue rather than green." The lake has a high level of clarity; when the water is not stirred up by rainfall it is not out of the ordinary to look over the side of the boat and see the bottom.

Being a clear lake, Hobbs has a low level of nutrients and supports limited plant and wildlife. Steve observes, "When I came out here there was really no weeds at all..." An El Nino winter and the severe water fluctuation has led to an increase in the nutrients in the lake, growth of shoreline grasses and a decrease in water clarity. On this subject, Steve comments, " That's where all this crazy grass comes from...you would think it would have died off because of the water level...but it hasn't done that yet." The majority of the residents around the lake maintain a natural shoreline. Steve can only think of a couple of homes that sport sandy beaches, the others simply clear enough of the shoreline vegetation for boat access. The trend toward maintenance of a natural shoreline may also be due to the water fluctuation and the vegetation fluctuation it brings. Steve was mowing the grass past the end of his dock a couple of years ago, grass that is now fully submerged.



Hobbs Lake northwest shoreline, note significant vegetation growth
photo by: SWFWMD

One of the benefits of an increase in vegetation is the additional food it provides for the fish population. As observed by Steve, "[the lake] is so clear and low in nutrients the fish don't grow rapidly. We don't have a big fish population." The quality of fishing in the lake has declined in the 10 years Steve has lived there. He attributes this to the low natural fish population combined with a lack of catch and release protocol, "You have 10 people coming in here and keeping everything they catch,

next thing you know...you've taken all the fish in the lake". With the increase in nutrients provided by the last year's rainfall and an increasing awareness of the benefits of catch and release, the future for the fish population looks optimistic.

The level of the lake has been an ongoing concern for the residents. The years of little rainfall took their toll on Lake Hobbs in addition to the pumping for Pinellas County. Lake Hobbs has a lake organization, originally formed to address the threat of development that the residents felt was undesirable. The organization was active in those dry years, exploring possibilities to augment the lake level with a well and discussing the negative impacts of the Pinellas County pumping wells. "We were basically due for our next meeting and then it started raining again..."

Development

The development of the land around Lake Hobbs occurred in the pre- 1985 years. In the 1940's, before the practice was prohibited, dredging to build up the shoreline resulted in deep holes in the lake bottom which enhance fishing.



Houses set back from the shore encourage a natural looking shoreline
photo by: SWFWMD

By the time Steve moved onto the lake in 1988, the majority of the 60 homes populating the lakefront were already built, and just a handful of homes have been built since then. Higher density development has been proposed periodically. Approximately twenty years ago, a developer wanted to put townhouses or condominiums on the lake and the lakefront property owners united to deter such action.

The majority of the homes on the lakefront are set back from the shoreline and the lake seems less developed than it is. Individuals who live on the property now own the majority of the land surrounding the lake and threat of further subdividing of the lots and additional development seems distant.

The Future

Life on Lake Hobbs is characterized by the tranquility of the lake supported by stable development. When queried about the sense of community, Steve comments, "Everybody's pretty nice and friendly out here...just kind of does their own thing..." Doing their own thing seems to work for residents of Lake Hobbs. The Lake Organization is in place if another drought threatens the lake level or if the expansion of highway 41 brings new development threats to their environment.