

# On Our Pond

A NEWSLETTER FOR CLEANER WATER & BETTER  
AQUATIC ENVIRONMENTS IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



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Winter 2013

## 2012 Best Maintained Pond

See page 3 for details

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Snap & Send  
Public Purpose  
Palm Canal Restoration  
Clean Your Septic Tank  
Stream Waterwatch  
Kenny's Back!**

#### **On Our Pond**

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## Report Water Pollution from Your Smartphone

Have you ever seen a problem while you're out but not had the time to gather information and report it later? We're pleased to announce a new mobile-friendly way to report water pollution. It's quick and no hassle. Simply snap a picture with your phone, tablet, or any other mobile device and email it straight to [reportpollution@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:reportpollution@hillsboroughcounty.org). Make sure to include a location, like an intersection or address, in the text of the email.

You'll receive an auto-reply letting you know the email was received. We'll take it from there. That's it!

On our end, we'll take those emails and enter them into the appropriate path for investigation and correction.

Of course, you can still report by phone or through our weblinks if you want to submit more details or want to receive follow-up from staff. This is just one more way we can help you take care of our water resources.

## Snap & Send

**Report water pollution directly from your smartphone or tablet. It's easy and anonymous.**

### Here's how:

- 📷 Snap a picture of the problem,
- ✉ Send it to [reportpollution@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:reportpollution@hillsboroughcounty.org), and
- 📍 Include the location in the email.



**That's it. We'll take it from there.**

You can still submit detailed reports through our website at [www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org](http://www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org) or by calling 627-2600.



## Lake, Pond & Stream Night Coming Soon



The Annual Lake, Pond, and Stream Night is coming again this Spring. This event is free to all program participants and features informational displays, activities, and speakers all about topics that are important to you as a lake, stream, or pond resident and volunteer.

It's a great way to find out what services and programs are available to you and a good time to meet other people who are dealing with the same things you are around the water front. Learn tips and solutions and share your stories. It's also the perfect way to drum up some support from your neighbors. Bring them along!

Watch for announcements in the near future.

If there's anything you'd like to learn about at the event, let us know! [aragonj@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:aragonj@hillsboroughcounty.org)

## 08-09 Eaglebrook: Best Maintained Pond of 2012

Every fall, we hold our Best Maintained Pond competition, or Pond Judging as we call it for short. It's a time for pond groups to show off the work they've done over the growing season and an opportunity for them to receive feedback from several environmental professionals in the area. Just for fun, we rank all the ponds according to the same criteria we teach our pond groups to evaluate their restoration by. The pond that has the highest combined score, gets a prize.

This year we held the pond judging in October. We had 6 ponds enter the competition. All ponds looked pretty good to our judges, but this year 08-09 Eaglebrook came up with the highest score.

Eaglebrook sits in the northwest part of the County off of Hutchison Rd. It's tucked between a cypress dome and a scrubby wetland. Residents have done lots of work to pull back the overgrowth and plant native wetland plants. They've installed a foot bridge over their weir and built a sitting area by the pond for residents to enjoy. Shortly after their cleanup and initial planting, the pond experienced a duckweed bloom, but a little

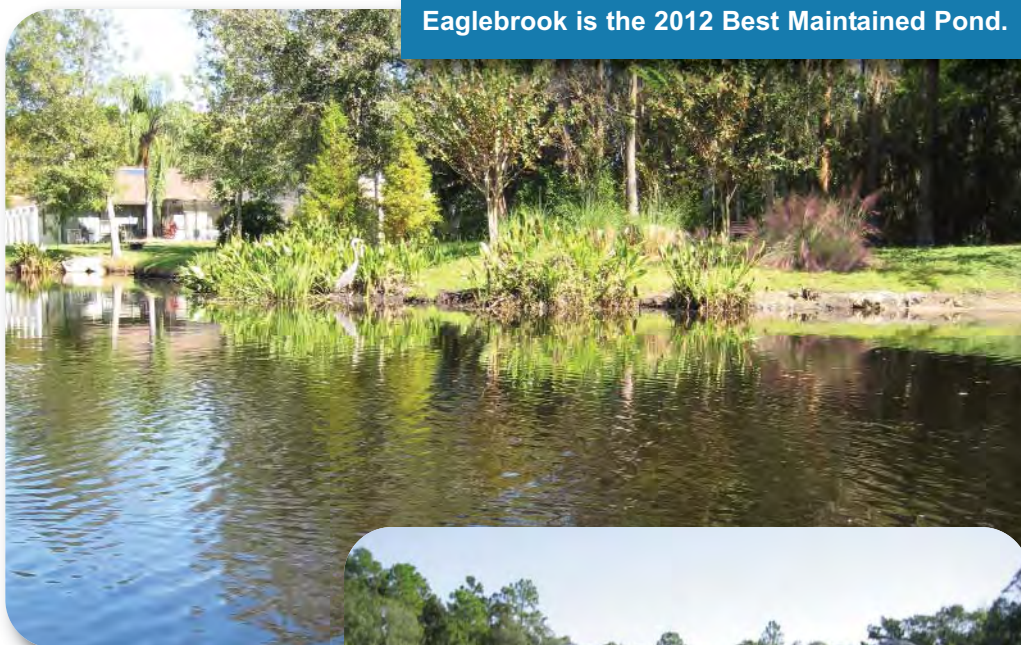
attention, and some time for the native plants to grow in, resolved the problem. Now the pond is popular with wading birds and home to lots of fish.

Congratulations to Eaglebrook Pond Group for keeping your pond in good shape this many years, and congratulations to all 6 of our competitors. While we can only have one winner, all of you are doing a great job with your ponds. We hope the judges' comments were helpful. They provide a perspective that you might not receive very often.

### Judging Results

#### 216 Total Possible Points

Eaglebrook (08-09)	164pts
Forest North (07-03)	153pts
Reynoldswood (03-17)	145pts
Lower Foothill (10-07)	134pts
Osprey Park (12-07)	125pts
Tarawood (08-13)	124pts



Eaglebrook is the 2012 Best Maintained Pond.



Judges visit each pond on the same day to evaluate them.



If you didn't compete this year, watch for the announcement next year. You'll never know how good your pond is if you don't send in the application. And who knows? Your pond could be the next Best Maintained Pond!

## Ponder This- Same County, Different Worlds



## Pond Plant Spotlight: Swamp Hibiscus

By: Kyle Edington



Swamp Hibiscus has large beautiful flowers.

Many Floridians are familiar with the genus Hibiscus as their beautiful, colorful flowers are seen donning Florida-Friendly landscapes across the state. While many of these Hibiscus shrubs originated somewhere in the Far East, there are a handful of these flowering shrubs that are native to the wetland communities of our beautiful state.

In fact, one of the most brilliant flowers within the genus Hibiscus can be found right here in Hillsborough County. The Swamp Hibiscus, *Hibiscus coccineus*, has a five-petaled, crimson-red flower that can be upwards of 8 inches across. This perennial flower blooms all summer long and into the fall.

Growing up to 7 feet tall, the Swamp Hibiscus typically towers above the other wetland shrubs and will be very hard to miss if one is tromping around a local swamp or marsh. As one of the largest of the North American wildflowers, the Swamp Hibiscus would make for a brilliant addition to any pond.

## Private Lakes – Public Purpose

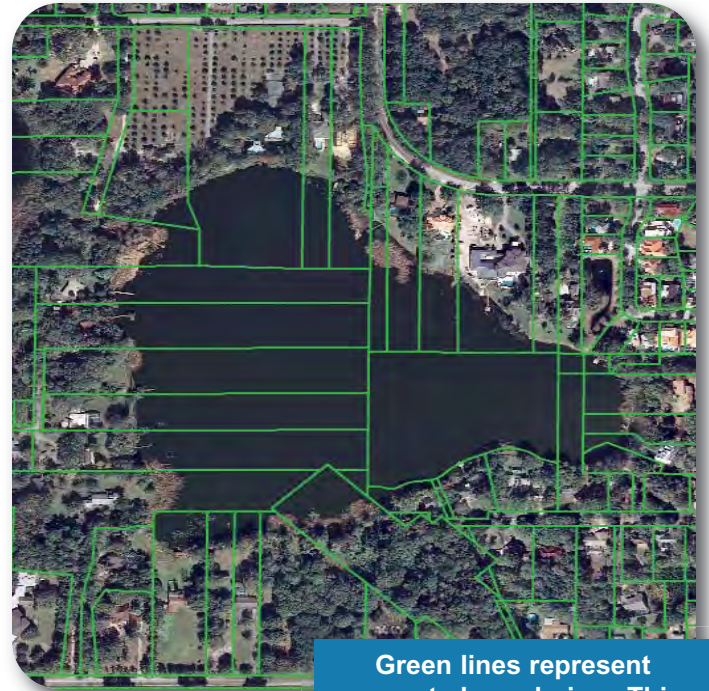
“Public Purpose” is a concept that guides all County business. As a public agency, we can do nothing without a public purpose. This ensures that we don’t spend taxpayer money on solely private concerns.

Sometimes, the public purpose test restricts us from doing things people think we should. For example, the County isn’t actually responsible to keep private property from flooding. It’s responsible to keep *public* property, like a road, from flooding. A lot of the time, when someone calls in a flooding complaint there is also flooding of public assets. So, we don’t split hairs as long as there is a public benefit. But the public purpose still has to be there. In some cases, we can’t do anything.

Sometimes the public purpose concept gets even fuzzier. For example, the vast majority of lakes in Hillsborough County are entirely privately owned. Sure, there’s the old maxim that you can’t own the water, but this doesn’t say anything about the ground under the water or all around it. Even the water itself can be private under certain circumstances. This severely limits what the County can do on such a lake. But at the same time, the County also has a responsibility to protect public resources and prevent pollution to them. If that water is stored in a private lake, it still needs to be protected. So obviously, there is some public purpose in certain actions on private property.

The trick is to figure out where and how the County can do things on lakes. This is usually determined on a case by case basis, since every situation has its own set of circumstances and rules. That’s why the Lake Management Program, which we discussed in the last newsletter, is set up the way it is. It relies on partnerships with homeowners just like you to help monitor resources and identify concerns. Then we work through all the details together and come to a determination of what can be done about each concern. Where we can’t directly help, we can provide advice. This helps ensure that all actions are working toward the same goals.

It might seem like a needlessly complicated system, and sometimes it might be. But that’s what we’ve got to work with. On the upside, it does ensure that Hillsborough County government works only for the public good.



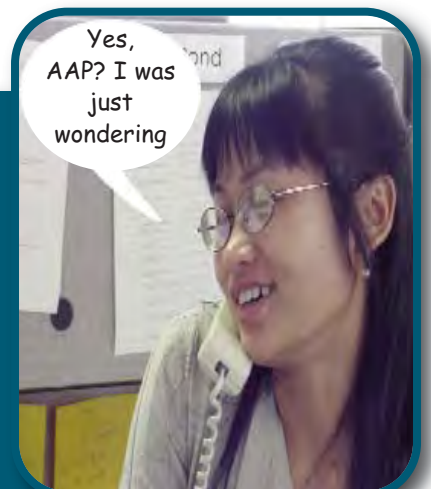
Green lines represent property boundaries. This lake is entirely private.

### What do you want to know?

Is there anything you’ve been wondering about lakes, ponds, streams, stormwater, water pollution, or how the County interacts with any of these? Chances are others want to know the same things. So if there’s something you’d like to learn more about, let us know. We can publish an article on it in an upcoming newsletter. This newsletter is for you!

Send your questions, comments, or ideas to [aragonj@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:aragonj@hillsboroughcounty.org). Or write us at the address on the front cover. We want to hear from you.

Yes, AAP? I was just wondering



## Palm Canal Wetland Enhancement

By: Hal Hart, East Lake resident

Since March of this year, the residents of East Lake Park have invested over 1,000 volunteer hours in a project called the Palm Canal Wetlands Treatment Project. The primary goal of the project is to filter the stormwater input into East Lake through the construction of a wetland in Palm Canal located on the west side of the lake. To that end, volunteers have trimmed more than 40 trees that hung over the canal and removed thousands of invasive aquatic plants. Because the surrounding area is pasture land, it was also necessary to install over 400 feet of livestock fence to stop the cattle and horses from entering the canal.



East Lake Park residents restored a wetland that flows into East Lake.

We have begun installing approximately 700 wetland plants. Our hope is to supplement these plantings in the spring through the award of a grant.

Funding sources for the project included \$2,500 from the East Lake Park Special Dependent District, cash donations from residents, and donations of food and other refreshments from residents. In addition, Mary Help of Christians, the owner of the surrounding pasture land, graciously allowed us access to the area during construction and cooperated in the permitting process.

We are very proud of the progress we have made and welcome visitors to the site to see the result of our efforts.

Septic Tanks should be cleaned every 3-5 years, even if they still work.



## Clean Your Septic Tank

Did you know that many homes around lakes in Hillsborough County rely on septic tanks, even in the middle of the city? These houses were usually built before the sanitary sewer lines were placed. Unfortunately, low-lying areas are the worst place for this.

Septic tanks work by storing wastewater and allowing bacteria to break down the waste while the water slowly filters out into the surrounding soil. But the tank only holds so much. If it's too full, it stops working correctly and barely-treated sewage seeps into the ground. In low-lying areas, this bacteria and nutrient-laden water quickly makes its way into streams and lakes, making them unsafe places to swim or fish. The thing is, the toilets

will keep flushing for years even though the tank is no longer cleaning the water.

Fortunately, there's a simple solution. Have your tank cleaned out every 3 to 5 years, or per the manufacturers recommendations. It's that easy! This keeps your tank working correctly and prevents costly failure if the drain field clogs up. What's more, it has a direct impact on the condition of the lake or stream that attracted you to your house in the first place! Cleanout is around \$200-\$500 which is only about \$9 a month over 5 years. You sure won't find a sewer bill that low!

## Stream Waterwatch



Volunteers of all ages learn to use their stream sampling equipment.

The Hillsborough County Stream Waterwatch Program trains volunteers to monitor and evaluate water quality conditions of local streams and rivers. The program is sponsored by Hillsborough County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District and is managed by Hillsborough Community College (HCC).

There are two levels of participation. Level I is the starting point for new volunteers. The emphasis in this level is on using watershed walks and visual surveys as evaluation tools. Volunteers regularly evaluate a stream segment, pick up litter which helps improve water quality, and report results to Hillsborough County Stream Waterwatch.

Level II focuses on the chemical and biological monitoring of water quality. Chemical monitoring is conducted monthly and involves sampling your selected site for dissolved oxygen, pH, clarity, temperature and depending on location, salinity.

Biological monitoring is conducted quarterly and involves identifying and counting macro invertebrates (bugs and other spineless critters). The purpose of biological monitoring is to quickly assess both water quality and habitat. The abundance and diversity of macro invertebrates is an indication of overall stream health. Biological training may also be conducted on an individual basis at your site.

In both levels, gathering and sharing information about the adopted stream, and reporting problems when noticed, helps protect the health of our streams. Data is uploaded monthly to the Wateratlas at [www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org/sww](http://www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org/sww).

All levels of participation require training. Training sessions include an overview of the program, chemical and biological monitoring techniques, and quality assurance testing to assure we're collecting clean and accurate samples. Training workshops are held at various parks in Hillsborough County and at the HCC's Plant City campus.

## Calendars Still Available

2013 Environmental Programs Calendars are still available. These calendars feature photos taken by people in our lake, pond, and stream programs.

Calendars are available free upon request, while supplies last. To request a calendar, email [mcgee@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:mcgee@hillsboroughcounty.org).

Don't forget to include your name, mailing address, and number of calendars.



**The Adopt-A-Pond Program**  
Hillsborough County Public Works Dept.  
Environmental Services  
2420 N Falkenburg Rd.  
Tampa, FL 33619  
**Mail Code 1384**

Pre sort Standard  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Tampa, FL 33601  
Permit No 295



Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners  
*An Affirmative Action-Equal Opportunity Employer*

## **Kenny's back! Find him in this issue!**

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If you've received this newsletter for long enough, you might remember our friend Kenny. Kenny is erosion. You can find his effects anywhere you have dirt and water. He loves to dig in the wet dirt and leaves a long trail of sediment wherever he's been.

Well, Kenny has been spotted once again. He's hiding somewhere in this newsletter. If you find him, let us know where you see him and we'll send you a prize. Look carefully. You know the kind of places he likes to hang out.

Email his location in the newsletter to [mcgee@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:mcgee@hillsboroughcounty.org). Be specific!

And don't forget to look for his effects out in the real world too!

