

On Our Pond

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



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Lake, Pond & Stream Night Re-Cap

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On Our Pond

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Adopt-A-Pond is sponsored by Hillsborough County, and the Northwest Hillsborough, Hillsborough River, and Alafia River Basin Boards of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and YOU!

Introducing Amber Jones!

By John McGee



Amber is the new member of our Environmental Programs Team.

The Environmental Programs Team is pleased to welcome our new Environmental Scientist, Amber Jones. For those who don't know, the Environmental Programs Team is the group that brings you this newsletter along with all the other Stormwater Environmental Programs.

Amber is new to Florida. She and her husband just moved here from Utah where she worked at Utah State University. She has a background in Environmental Engineering and has worked on water quality assessment projects out west. She'll be actively involved in lake monitoring, working on our Total Maximum Daily Load program, as well as helping out with the education programs.

Amber has worked in Peru for Engineers Without Borders, volunteered in Venezuela, and has been a river guide in Moab, UT. She speaks Spanish, enjoys outdoor activities, plays basketball, and so far, is really enjoying the Florida lifestyle.

Earth Day's 40th Birthday!

Earth Day was April 22nd! In celebration of Earth Day, check out the Earth Day facts and tips below. Find the underlined words in the puzzle (words may be forward, backward, straight or diagonal) and send your completed puzzle to the address on the front of this newsletter for a prize!

- ♻️ The first Earth Day was commemorated April 22, 1970, and over 20 million people participated in the event.
- ♻️ After the first Earth Day, Congress created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and passed the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.
- ♻️ Did you know that the most amount of water usage for a typical household is for irrigation? You can reduce your water usage by skipping a week of irrigation!
- ♻️ Invasive plant species can shade out natives as well as destroy habitat and food sources for wildlife, so plant more native, Florida-Friendly plants.
- ♻️ Stormwater runoff continues to be a major source of pollution to the environment. Protect our local waterways by limiting runoff from your property and reducing your pollutant load.
- ♻️ For more information on Earth Day events and tips, visit www.earthday.net and www.epa.gov/earthday.

Earth Day Word Search

I	N	V	A	S	I	V	E	N	S	X	E	R
R	R	G	E	Z	M	B	E	O	X	V	Y	E
E	U	I	N	V	A	S	I	I	I	A	C	T
A	V	N	C	H	L	J	B	T	D	E	Q	A
R	Z	E	O	L	I	R	A	A	F	H	P	W
T	P	I	N	F	E	N	P	G	C	Q	G	A
H	B	H	M	T	F	A	M	I	E	U	Y	W
A	P	R	I	L	S	M	N	R	G	C	O	Q
E	C	T	N	E	M	N	O	R	I	V	N	E
L	M	Y	Z	W	A	E	Z	I	F	E	G	N

2010 Lake, Pond & Stream Night Re-Cap!

This year's Lake, Pond and Stream Night was a big success! The event was held on Friday, March 12th at the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) in Tampa. The event is to thank all of our program participants for all of their hard work and to give them an opportunity to share with others. We had 23 exhibitors with information on water resources ranging from management to recreation using environmentally friendly boats. A special appearance was even made by the new member of our program; Pete the Pelican Pirate!

In addition to the variety of exhibitors, there were also three seminars held throughout the evening, including presentations about seagrasses of Tampa Bay, exotic pet amnesty, and how to make a pond-in-a-jar.

Laura Thorne from the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission informed us about seagrasses in Tampa Bay. People may not realize their restoration efforts in lakes and ponds can help preserve the seagrass population in Tampa Bay.

Attendees also learned what to do with exotic pets and got a chance to meet our slithery reptile guests. Shawna Everidge from the Plant City Water Resource Management Division discussed the issues surrounding exotic pets and the Suncoast Herpetological Society brought some of their reptile ambassadors for everyone to meet. It is important to be an informed exotic pet shopper to prevent unwanted exotic pets.

A special thanks to all of the following participants

Aquatic Eco-Systems

Charles Holloway's Lake Front Beach Cleanups

Endeavour Green Electric Hybrid Yachts

Jones Edmunds & Assoc., Inc.

Keep Hillsborough County Beautiful

Land & Water Engineering Science, Inc.

New Earth Industries, Inc.

PBS&J

Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc.

The Florida Aquarium

USF Florida Center for Community Design & Research

Officer Snook & Pete the Pelican Pirate meet at last!



Photo by Sharon Spires

One of our guests was brave enough to hold a king snake!

Our final surprise presentation was actually about an article that was featured in our winter newsletter. Participants were able to make their own pond-in-a-jar! It was a little messy for our staff, but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Eighteen families were able to bring home their own jar at the end of the evening. If you made a jar at the Lake, Pond and Stream Night or if you have made your own at home, let us know about it. E-mail us at aragonj@hillsboroughcounty.org and let us know how your pond-in-a-jar is doing and whether you have noticed any additional unexpected life in the jar.

Once again, I would like to thank all of our volunteers, exhibitors, presenters, and program participants who attended!

Trash Trooper Litter Hotline

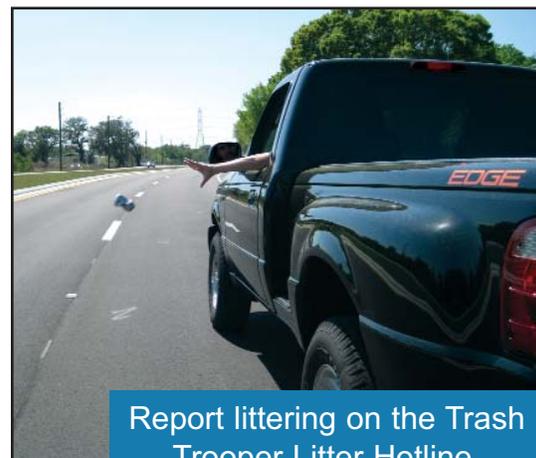
Picture a driver tossing litter out of their car ... debris blowing from the back of a truck ... someone dumping trash in an empty lot. Have you ever seen this and wanted to do something about it? Now you can, thanks to the Trash Trooper Litter Hotline.

The hotline allows citizens to act as “Trash Troopers” and anonymously report littering, especially on roadways. To use the hotline, record the violator’s license tag #; make and color of the vehicle; the date, time, and location of the infraction; and the type of litter. Call **1-877-Y-LITTER (1-877-954-8837)** or email **KHCB3@yahoo.com** to report the incident.

Keep Hillsborough County Beautiful (KHCB), a local non-profit litter-prevention organization obtains contact information for the offender based on the vehicle’s tag number and sends them a warning letter. The letter explains Florida’s anti-litter policies and the penalties for violation. Realizing that their actions are observed deters offenders from future littering.

Litter on roadways often washes into the stormwater system and can end up in ponds, lakes, streams, and eventually Tampa Bay. Even cigarette butts, though small, can cause damage. They have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, and marine mammals, and they take up to 50 years to decompose.

For more information on litter reduction, recycling, community clean-ups, and the Trash Trooper Litter Hotline, visit the Keep Hillsborough County Beautiful website at **www.khcbonline.org**.



Report littering on the Trash Trooper Litter Hotline.

Pond Group Reminder: The Spring season is a great time to review the winter damage on your pond and clean-up old leaves and growth from last year to uncover and make way for new spring growth. It’s a good time to transplant from established clumps of aquatics to start new planting areas. Also, remember to submit your workday reports to stay active with the program!

Pond Plant Spotlight – Sunshine Mimosa



Sunshine mimosa is great ground cover for sunny areas.



By Amy Collins

Mimosa strigillosa, more commonly known as sunshine mimosa, is a Florida native. This plant enjoys full sun and moist soil. It can be found throughout Florida, except the extreme southern portion of the state. It is found in habitats such as woodlands, disturbed areas, and damp sites.

Sunshine mimosa is a groundcover plant that has a fast growth rate and stands about three to nine inches tall when mature. This plant is drought-tolerant and good for xeriscaping. Birds, bees, and butterflies are attracted to sunshine mimosa. It blooms in early spring to fall and has a pink or rose colored puffball on top of a short stem. Its leaves are small, fern-like leaflets. What is interesting about its leaves is that they are sensitive. When you touch them they will react and fold up!



Lake & Stream News

www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org



The Lake Survey Results Are In!

In the last edition of this newsletter, we asked you to tell us about your lake by filling out a short online survey. The response wasn't great. But we did hear from some of you. Not surprisingly, the responses weren't that different from each other. Here's what you told us:

The most enjoyable thing about living on your lake is the scenery, but many of you like the wildlife and the recreation the lake provides.

The least enjoyable aspect of living on a lake is the maintenance, specifically invasive or exotic species removal. But a few of you don't seem to like the way people use the lake for recreation.

The most important things you emphasized about your lakes was the cleanliness, health, and maintenance. But this question got the most varied response. Many of you were most concerned with wildlife protection, followed by water levels, and maintaining the ability to use your lake for water activities.

Lastly, we asked what one thing you would change about living on your lake. Most of you said getting the surrounding community educated and involved to help take care of the lake. A few mentioned wanting more wildlife and stricter enforcement/protection of the lake.

The response wasn't great enough to give us a picture of the whole county, but we can see some trends in this response that echo what we've seen in the communities. People use our shared resources in different ways, and one of the biggest issues is protecting our lakes to preserve all of our rights to enjoy them. Working together can make this goal possible.

Lake & Stream Field Days

This year, we are pleased to offer an opportunity for you to come out in your area and learn a bit more about lakes, and streams. If you are a Lakewatch or Stream Waterwatch volunteer, this is a great chance to talk about your site with the experts and to brush-up on your sampling skills. If you're not a part of our programs yet, this is also a great opportunity to learn just what's involved and how we can help.

We'll be holding three of these Lake and Stream Field Days in each of the three most prominent lake and stream areas: the northwest, the central/eastern, and the southern/eastern regions. Watch for the announcements on the watershed atlas or in your email. The first Field Day will be May 22nd at Lettuce Lake Park in Tampa from 9:00am to 12:00pm!

The event is totally free and there is no specific schedule. Just come on by while we're there. Hope to see you there!



After the Freeze



This winter's hard freeze may have caused a lot of damage to our yards, but it provides a great opportunity for us to re-think the traditional landscape design. Before you make your first trip to the garden shop, consider redesigning your landscape to make it more Florida-Friendly.

Florida-Friendly landscaping can take many different forms, from the highly manicured to the more natural appearance. Having a Florida-Friendly yard just means that you are following the 9 environmentally sustainable practices listed below. If any of you are like me, you lost some of your turf grass in the hard freeze. Instead of replacing the grass to have it suck

up a lot of water and possibly die again next winter, think about replacing it with native plants. There are many native plants and groundcover that are cold-hardy, like Sunshine Mimosa!

There are many benefits to converting your yard over to be Florida-Friendly. You will be able to use less water for irrigation, less fertilizers and pesticides, reduce the amount of runoff from your property, and provide more habitat for wildlife. Did you know that irrigation is the biggest use of water in Florida? Also, with all of the developed areas in this county, it is important to reduce the amount of polluted runoff and provide natural areas for animals to take shelter, eat, and nest in.

There are many sources available to find out which native plants are suitable for your yard including the Hillsborough County Extension Service's website at <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/> and the Florida Native Plant Society's website at <http://www.fnps.org/>. You can also call your local native plant nursery for more information.



The 9 Principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping

1. Right Plant, Right Place
2. Water Efficiently
3. Fertilize Appropriately
4. Mulch
5. Attract Wildlife
6. Manage Yard Pests Responsibly
7. Recycle
8. Reduce Stormwater Runoff
9. Protect the Waterfront

Refresher Course: The Stinky Truth About Fish Kills!

There aren't many things that can beat waking up to a beautiful sunrise on a cold winter morning, walking out onto your back patio to enjoy a nice, hot cup of coffee along with the scenery of your beautiful waterfront property, when you are suddenly smacked in the face by the stench of rotting fish!

Along with the joys of living on waterfront property, you also sometimes have to deal with the not-so-pleasant features that come with the territory, such as fish kills. This past winter, many of you got to experience exactly what I am talking about.

Fish kills can happen at any point during the year and can vary from just a few dead fish to hundreds or even thousands of dead fish. Since many of us have such strong connections to these aquatic environments, it is understandable the concern many voice when these events occur. "Is there something wrong with my lake or pond?" and, "Was a chemical dumped there?" are often questions that we hear.

Causes

The truth about fish kills is that they can be caused by several different factors, with most of them involving some type of stress on the fish. There are natural and human-caused fish kills. Over the last 50 years, direct human impacts to our waterways from single identifiable sources, such as industries, has been drastically reduced due to environmental regulations. Nowadays, fish kills from these types of sources are often due to accidental spills of contaminated substances and rarely occur.

The majority of fish kills in Florida are due to natural causes, which happened to be the case for many of your lakes and ponds this past winter. Common natural causes are cold temperatures, parasites or diseases, spawning

fatalities, and sometimes toxic algae blooms.

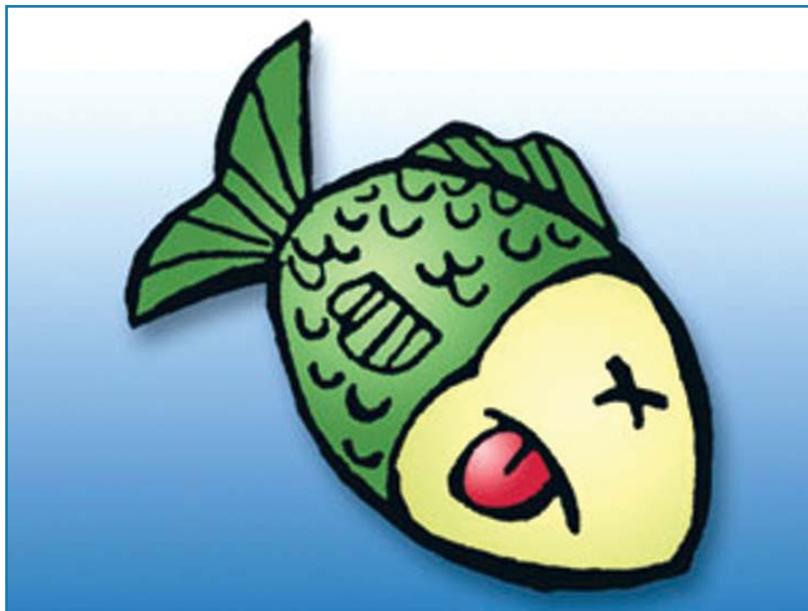
This past winter, we had unseasonably cold temperatures for an extended period of time. Many of the fish that were found dead were exotic tropical fish that can't tolerate cold temperatures, like blue tilapia.

Although we had some fish kills this winter, the most common natural cause of fish kills in Florida is low dissolved oxygen levels in the water. Fish depend on oxygen to survive just like we do; they just get it a little differently. Fish absorb oxygen from the water as it passes over their gills. So when there is not enough dissolved oxygen in the water, the fish can become stressed and die.

Dissolved oxygen levels in the water fluctuate all the time, but rapid or drastic changes in any or all of the following factors can be deadly to fish: the weather, temperature (warmer water holds less dissolved oxygen than cold water), sunlight, and/or the amount of plants and animals in the water.

What Should I Do With These Dead Fish?

If a fish kill happens in your neighborhood, you can report the incident to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Fish Kill Hotline at (800) 636-0511. The FWC and the county, however, are not responsible for cleaning up the fish.



Fish kills are naturally occurring events and nature can be left to clean-up. Within a week, typically animal scavengers will have taken care of the mess. Other options are to bury the fish or throw them away in the trash.

Enjoy your pond for all that it has to offer; the good, the bad, and sometimes the smelly!

The Adopt-A-Pond Program
Hillsborough County Public Works Dept.
Specialized Services
2420 N Falkenburg Rd.
Tampa, FL 33619
Bill to 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

What's wrong with this calendar page?

As we were enjoying looking through the 2010 Hillsborough County Stormwater Environmental Programs Calendar, we flipped the page to the month of March and noticed something just wasn't quite right about this page. At first, we couldn't put our finger on exactly what was wrong with it, but after further examination (and someone pointing it out to us), we identified a mistake, or better said, an oversight or boo-boo.

Sometimes these things happen; even after many, many people have looked it over and it is sent off to be printed. Can you spot the mistake on the March calendar page?

If you can find the boo-boo, send your answer by e-mail to aragonj@hillsboroughcounty.org or give us a call at (813) 744-5671 and ask for Jennifer Aragon. You could win a prize! Prizes are limited, so get your answer to us soon.

Calendar Correction

The photograph for the month of July is from pond group 09-04 Pura-Vida and was taken by Charles Chrismer in September 2009.

Can you find the mistake?

