

LEGAL COPY

# Save Our Canals!



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ENV. PROT. COMM  
OF H.C.

July 29, 2005

Marianne Cufone, Esq.  
5951 Memorial Hwy., #106  
Tampa, FL 33615  
813.881.0150

Mr. Tom Ash  
Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County/ERM Division  
3629 Queen Palm Dr.  
Tampa, Florida 33619

## Re: Pollution Recovery Trust Fund

Dear Mr. Ash:

On behalf of Save Our Canals, please accept the enclosed documents as application for consideration of funding under this year's Pollution Recovery Fund assistance program. Enclosed please find:

- 1) Pollution Recovery Fund Assistance Application
- 2) Supplemental Answers to the Pollution Recovery Fund Application
- 3) Organizational details (Top 10 Questions and Answers)
- 4) Organizational history (The Founding of Save Our Canals)
- 5) 2005 newspaper articles recognizing SOcS as a community force against water pollution
- 6) Attachments for the Pollution Recovery Fund Application, including color maps of proposed recovery sites.

Our group intends to continue its work to rehabilitate canals and water areas in Hillsborough County through our Water and coastal Area Restoration (WARM) initiative. We hope to remove debris, provide new filtration devices for stormwater outflows, maintain previously installed devices and engage the public and industry through active education on preventing water pollution.

We look forward to increasing our efforts with you and others dedicated to environmental protection in Hillsborough County.

Sincerely,

Marianne Cufone, Esq.



## APPLICATION FOR POLLUTION RECOVERY FUND ASSISTANCE

DATE OF APPLICATION: July 29, 2005

### A. BASIC ASSISTANCE

1. Applicant: The legal name of the applicant/organization, the organizational unit and the complete mailing address of the applicant.

Name: Save Our Canals  
Organization: Non-profit Corporation  
Address: 8703 Cobblestone Dr., Tampa, FL 33615

2. Project Manager Information: Give name and title of the representative of the applicant who will be the Environmental Protection Commission's principle contact concerning this application

Name Marianne Cufone  
Title Counsel  
Address 5951 Memorial Hwy. #106 Tampa, FL 33615  
Phone Number 813.881.0150  
Project Title Water Area Restoration and Maintenance (WARM) Project  
Start: Date of funding \_\_\_\_\_ End: One year from start date \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Time \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Cost of Project \$ 200k  
Total EPC share requested \$ 74k

3. Assistance Type: **New or Renewal** (check one)

New - Award of funds for initial request within the project period.

X Renewal - Award of funds for a project beyond the current project period.

4. Project Location: The specific location(s) of the project. (Attach Site Map)

Hillsborough County Water Areas: Town & Country (Dana Shores)

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5. Is the Project for:

X Restoration of a polluted area

X Mitigation of the effects of pollution

X Pollution Control Activity to prevent or minimize pollution

X Educational

6. Is the Project directed toward restoring an identified "polluted area" (a geographic area destroyed or altered by dredging or filling or contaminated by an emission or discharge), or toward terminating an identified pollution source?

Identify and explain:

Please see attached answers.

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7. Is the harm or potential harm to health, safety or welfare of the public or wildlife actual or potential? Does the project seek to alleviate actual or potential harm and what is the severity of the harm and the causal relationship between the "pollution" and the harm?

Identify and explain:

Please see attached answers.

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8. How long has the pollution existed or how long before any harm will be evident?

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Please see attached answers.

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9. Identify and describe how the project proposes to alleviate the pollution (addressing technical, practical, and cost effectiveness issues):

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Please see attached answers.

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10. Is the polluted area one which has previously been subject to commission enforcement and, if so, when and what was the result?

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Please see attached answers.

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11. If no actual pollution exists and no prior commission enforcement action has occurred, does the project otherwise enhance pollution control activities within the County?

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Please see attached answers.

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12. Can this Project be divided into separate and independent parts, and if so,

a) what are they? Yes: 1. Remediation, 2. Prevention, and 3. Education

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b) how would the costs be allocated between them? 1. 12k 2. 59k 3. 3k

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c) would the applicant be willing to accept only partial funding? Yes, however it would be most beneficial to the community if the entire program is funded.

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13. Are other funding sources committed to the project? Yes  
How much and for what? Over 117k in kind donations for personnel, 4k in creative design and printing, 3k in materials and ~2k in annual dues.
- 
14. What other funding sources may be available and how much? \_\_\_\_\_  
Various federal, state, and private grant programs exist to support pollution remediation, prevention and education. SOcS intends to explore those once base funding is secured and charitable status is granted.
- 
15. Why do you believe that this Project is of sufficient importance to justify the expenditure of Pollution Recovery Funds? Please see attached answers.
- 
16. Will the project enhance the value of private property, and if so, whose? \_\_\_\_\_  
Please see attached answers.

## B. ATTACHMENTS

**All applicants must submit responses to the following as attachments corresponding to the indicated numbers:**

1. Please provide a detailed map of the project site.
2. Principal Investigator and Key Personnel - Present a biographical sketch of the principal Investigator incorporating the following information: Name, Address, Phone Number, Education, Background and other qualifying experience for the project.
3. Project Narrative - Please provide a narrative statement describing the project that includes the following:
  - a) Objectives of this Project - Describe the principal and subordinate environmental objectives of the project. Pinpoint any relevant physical, economic, social, financial, institutional or other problems requiring solution.
  - b) Results and/or Benefits Expected - Identify specific environmental results and/or benefits to be derived from the project. Include all primary and secondary benefits accruing to the grantee, to the pollution served, and in

general, to the public and environment.

- c) General Project Information - Discuss the criteria that will be used to evaluate the results and successes of the project as well its relationship to other work planned, anticipated or underway.
- 4. Scope of Work – Provide a detailed scope of work for the proposed project. List in chronological order a schedule of accomplishments, progress, or milestones that are anticipated over the length of the project.
- 5. Budget Information – Please itemize expenditures necessary to perform project using the following format:

**BUDGET CATEGORIES**

	<b>PRF Funds</b>	<b>Federal</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Other:</b>
<b>a. Personnel</b>					
<b>1. Project Mngr.</b>			\$29000.00		
<b>2. Attorney</b>			\$34400.00		
<b>3. Engineer</b>			\$43000.00		
<b>4. Graphic Design</b>			\$6000.00		
<b>b. Administrative</b>	\$1300.00		\$8600.00		
<b>c. Materials</b>	\$47980.00		\$3000.00		
<b>d. Contractual</b>	\$20520.00				
<b>e. Installation</b>	\$2200.00				
<b>f. Other</b>	\$2000.00		\$2000.00		
<b>g. Total Direct Charges (Sum of a. to f.)</b>	<b>\$74,000.00</b>		<b>\$126000.00</b>		
<b>GRAND TOTAL: \$200,000.00</b>					

**Supplemental Answers to Pollution Recovery Fund Application for Save Our Canals Inc. and the WARM Project (Water and coastal Area Restoration and Maintenance)**

A. Basic Assistance

1-5. Answers are completed on actual application form.

6. The WARM project was originally developed in 2004 as a way for concerned Hillsborough County residents to help address restoration of identified polluted areas, termination of identified pollution sources and education of the general public to help stop community contribution to pollution problems. A portion of the initial project, the purchase and installation of curb inlet baskets to prevent future pollutants from entering water areas, was funded by the PRF for 2004-2005. SOcS contributed materials, staff and other resources to supplement the funded portions of the project and achieve successes. This application requests renewed and increased funding for WARM Phase II.

Phase II expands SOcS efforts by targeting another pilot area, Dana Shores, for filtration devices (please see attached information on curb inlet baskets) as implemented during Phase I, plus possibly testing newer technology, if appropriate and approved by Hillsborough County. In addition, SOcS will coordinate and lead hands-on community clean-ups throughout Baycrest Park (Phase I) and Dana Shores (Phase II). Finally, SOcS proposes an educational component be supported so that the actions of uninformed individuals and local business will not hamper other clean-up efforts. This is key for long term success. During Phase I of WARM, SOcS began providing information to local homeowners including current laws regarding dumping in water areas and has seen significant results, including reduced grass cuttings and pet waste in water areas, also neighbors telling other neighbors about illegal and inappropriate activities related to waste disposal. Allocation of some funds to continue and increase this work is critical: we can continue efforts to help rehabilitate dirty water areas, but prevention is also important. Only through education can we change behavior.

Over the last year, SOcS worked with agencies, the general public and other organizations to promote clean-up of polluted canals, ditches and other water areas throughout Hillsborough County. Those experiences provide a foundation for an expanded effort in 2005-2006. SOcS intends to continue combating water area pollution through 3 primary means:

- Trash pick-ups and removal of other blockage materials, as permitted and required, so water areas will be immediately improved to allow proper drainage and flow of water from and to Tampa Bay.
- Funding placement and maintenance of filtration and trapping devices for areas with high concentrations of debris and silt so that new trash and other materials will gather in specific locations for ease of collection and will not pass back into the canals and other water areas that have been cleared through the clean-ups.
- An active education campaign. SOcS can help reduce general public and industry contribution to local pollution.

7. There is actual harm to the health, safety and welfare of the general public as well as wildlife from pollution of the canals, channels and other water areas in Hillsborough County. In just 2004 and 2005 there were about 57 "poor results" in tests for enterococci and/or fecal coliform bacteria on Hillsborough County Bay beaches, (specifically, Bahia, Ben T. Davis, Cypress, Davis Island, Picnic Island and Simmons Beaches) resulting in 24 beach advisories warning people not to swim in our waters. (Florida Healthy Beaches Program Report: <http://esetappsdo.h.doh.state.fl.us/irm00beachwater/default.aspx>). These bacteria are often used as indicators for the presence of sewage contamination of a waterway and the possible presence of other pathogenic organisms. Further, medical professionals in Hillsborough County acknowledge many gastrointestinal and skin problems that can be associated with directly contacting bacteria found in polluted water. (<http://www.floridacharts.com/charts/Domain2.aspx?Domain='05'>). For example, in just 2003, more than one million eighty five thousand Hillsborough County residents were reported with Giardiasis, a parasitic disease spread by contact with feces of an infected person or animal.

[http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/communicable\\_diseases/en/giardia.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/communicable_diseases/en/giardia.htm)). Many of our canals, channels and other water areas lead directly into Tampa Bay. Pollutants from them contaminate our beaches, and can cause illnesses.

Historically, Hillsborough County has been a water-based community. People make homes here to enjoy a certain lifestyle that includes swimming, snorkeling/diving, boating, fishing, and wildlife watching. Clearly, pollution is changing this.

Today, waters of Hillsborough County are unclean, as evidenced by the above statistics. Swimming in these areas can be dangerous. There is little visibility for snorkeling or diving. Where some clarity exists, wildlife is mostly absent. Fishing in canals and waterways is almost futile, there are very few fish remaining, and those caught are inedible; people believe them full of toxins. The community can't even use many of the canals for boating purposes, the weeds, overgrowth and siltation block passage. Some areas are now too narrow for canoes and kayaks.

Significantly, wildlife, once abundant in canal areas, is now less prevalent. Manatees often swam and even mated in some canals. Blue crabs and mullet were seen frequently and at times caught for fresh seafood. Ibis, roseate spoonbills and other common water birds lined the banks. These creatures don't visit our area anymore. There are rumors of dying waters in Hillsborough County.

The WARM Project Phase I began to alleviate actual current and potential future harm through the pilot project in Baycrest Park, partially funded through the PRF in 2004-2005. This included the installation and maintenance of filtration devices to prevent various materials and chemicals from entering water areas. SOcS intends to expand this effort by moving forward on Phase II of the program in 2005-2006. This includes:

1. Promoting immediate cleanup of polluted waters through hands-on efforts,
2. Funding and managing the maintenance of the filtration devices in the original pilot location, plus installing new filtration devices (and maintaining them) in another area of high stormwater contribution in Hillsborough County, and
3. Educating the public about how waters become polluted and what should be done to help prevent future pollution.

Currently, pollution in Tampa Bay and the connecting canals, channels and other water areas is troublesome: there is an overbearing stench, mounds of debris and silt. People are unable to swim, fish, and generally enjoy the local resources like they once could. These problems are directly related to pervasive water pollution.

8. Water and coastal area pollution has been rapidly increasing over time. Harm is already evident and escalating: People can't swim, snorkel/dive, fish, or even boat in some places. Canal and other water areas smell of decay, sewage and rotting trash. Water areas of Hillsborough County were once natural reprieves from urban life, where people went to relax, and enjoy water sports and wildlife. Now those same locales are eyesores, rivers of garbage and mud; an open sewer system.

9. SOcS intends to continue an aggressive pollution clean up and prevention campaign. The target areas are canals and other waterways of Hillsborough County. Means include: 1) hands-on clean-up projects coordinated through cooperative efforts with other organizations already engaging or interested in engaging in such activities, 2) working with local government to permit installation and maintenance of filtration devices and possibly other developing technology and, 3) an education initiative, working with SOcS members, and community partners, including local industry, to reach out to children, adults and businesses.

SOcS believes that the above outlined program will continue to be successful, due largely to the following factors:

- SOcS cooperative efforts with other entities has helped bring more attention to water pollution issues and allows for efficient usage of time and funds so that there is no duplication of efforts. SOcS is uniquely positioned as a group comprised of homeowners' associations, individuals and industry to participate in a comprehensive effort to address water pollution in Hillsborough County.
- Allowing the community to effectively address an issue that is a communal problem promotes unity and support for actions and management. SOcS began as a small local effort and now has developed into something much larger: SOcS is becoming a unified voice for Hillsborough County residents and a means to be involved with successfully managing our community resources. A single coordinated group can provide support such that enforcement needs are reduced and less burdensome.
- Taking on some responsibilities as an organization relieves burdens from others that might not have the funding, personnel or time to establish a long-term program or try new technologies. Rather than weighing down government entities that are already strapped financially and overcommitted, with too few staff, it is practical to have those most concerned with an issue be part of the efforts to address it.
- SOcS is already a recognized force in the community for rehabilitating and maintaining local water areas.

10. The areas targeted for pollution recovery and maintenance have been the subject of a number of enforcement actions. Neighbors talk of various citations for dumping trash, pumping bilge and oil, and discarding chemicals in canals and waterways. Also, dredging and filling without permits for private docks and other structures, and docks built outside guidelines has been problematic.

11. Actual pollution does exist, though only some enforcement has been available, due to insufficient funds and the small number of enforcement personnel committed to patrolling water areas. One notable difference between this year and last is an increase in neighbor awareness regarding dumping in water areas. SOcS work in 2004-2005 encouraged the community to participate in enforcement. Several members reported violations to EPC, the County Sheriff and others! Some even snapped photos and made videos as evidence. People are beginning to understand we all must participate in stewardship of our water resources.

The WARM has already enhanced pollution control in the County. Through hands-on clean-ups, installation and maintenance of filtration devices and public education, this Phase II of the project will promote partnerships between government officials and agencies, the local community and industry to restore and maintain our waterways.

12-14. Answers are completed on actual application form.

15. Hillsborough County is a major part of the Tampa Bay area, known for swimming, fishing, boating, wildlife watching and other water-based activities. Locals regularly talk about having, "a life on or by the Bay". This has become a standard motto for living here. Unfortunately, if pollution continues as it is now without remediation, days of Bay life might disappear. Our canals and waterways are polluted: overgrown, littered with trash, and stinking of raw sewage. SOcS is already helping to rebuild community pride and inspire a commitment to environmental stewardship, health and safety in Hillsborough County. This work should continue by addressing water quality problems that are so widespread and noticeable. People here love the water and wildlife associated with Hillsborough County. The WARM project can expand to help rehabilitate our canals and waterways and maintain them for the use and enjoyment of all.

16. The WARM project's main goal remains to recover and maintain the natural water resources of Hillsborough County, for the benefit of the community and its visitors. As a supplemental benefit, the project may also restore the value of public and private property adjacent to canals and waterways. This is an added benefit for the County. As property values increase, the tax base can expand, providing more funding for Hillsborough County community maintenance and betterment.

## B. Attachments

### **Attachments to Pollution Recovery Fund Application for Save Our Canals, Inc. and the WARM Project Phase II**

1. Maps: 1. Hillsborough County water areas and 2. WARM project proposed Phase II: Dana Shores

2. Principal Investigator: Kevin Kremkau

Gahagan & Bryant Associates Inc.  
3802 West Bay to Bay Boulevard  
Suite B-22  
Tampa, FL 33629-6826  
(813) 831-4408

Kevin Kremkau is a Project Engineer with Gahagan & Bryant Associates (GBA), a firm that provides an array of services, including hydrographic surveying, coastal engineering, channel design, dredged material handling and coastal and environmental restoration. GBA is the largest company in the U.S. specializing in hydrographic surveys, dredging engineering and subsurface investigations. Mr. Kremkau has nine years experience in hydrographic surveying and coastal engineering and is involved in all aspects of shore protection projects and navigation projects including surveying, permitting, design, construction monitoring, and project management. Current examples of projects include the Town of Jupiter Island Beach Rehabilitation Project, and the St. Lucie Inlet Federal Navigation Project. In 2002-2003, he oversaw a 6 mile restoration project on Jupiter Island beaches to rehabilitate critically eroded shoreline. He focuses on environmental monitoring to ensure only positive impacts and no water quality violations. He is currently preparing plans and specifications for a project to repair damage caused by hurricanes Francis and Jeanne. As an agent of Martin County, the local sponsor of the St. Lucie Inlet Federal Navigation Project, he is involved in the design and monitoring of periodic inlet maintenance events. Mr. Kremkau works with County, State and Federal agencies to help ensure their projects are developed in an environmentally responsible manner. Other clients that he has performed work for at GBA include numerous U.S. Army Corps of Engineers districts, the U.S. Navy, and various municipalities and private organizations. Kevin Kremkau graduated from the Florida Institute of Technology with a B.S. in Ocean Engineering in 1996, and resides in Hillsborough County.

3. Project narrative: The WARM project's main goal remains to recover and maintain the natural water resources of Hillsborough County, for the benefit of the community and its visitors, through work with county, state and federal agencies, as appropriate, the general public and other organizations.

a. *Objectives*:

1. Through trash pick-ups and removal of other blockage materials, as permitted and required, restore water areas to allow proper drainage and flow of water from and to Tampa Bay.
2. Fund management and maintenance of filtration devices in Phase I locale (Baycrest Park) and placement, management and maintenance of new devices in a new area (Dana Shores) of high debris and chemical contribution so that new trash and other marine debris will gather in specific locations for ease of collection (by professional contracted personnel) and will prevent passage back into the canals and other water areas that have been cleared through clean-ups.
3. Develop an active education campaign, to help reduce general public and industry contribution to local pollution and promote community participation in enforcing current laws about dumping.

b. *Results/benefits expected:*

The hope is for Hillsborough County water areas to be restored to natural conditions and pollution be minimized as soon as possible, so that all can enjoy our water resources and associated wildlife.

Hillsborough County is a major part of the Tampa Bay area, known for swimming, fishing, boating, wildlife watching and other water-based activities. Locals regularly talk about having, “a life on or by the bay”. This has become a standard motto for living here. Unfortunately, if things continue as they are going, days of Bay life might disappear. Our canals and waterways are polluted: overgrown, littered with trash, and stinking of raw sewage. The WARM project intends to protect and improve Bay life.

Specifically we hope to achieve:

1. clean-up of marine debris and other blockage materials
2. prevention of future pollutants
3. community awareness and action on water pollution prevention
4. collaborative efforts with government and community to clean and maintain water areas over time

c. *General project information: criteria to evaluate work:*

We intend to maintain specific records on:

1. The amount of materials collected in debris clean-ups
2. The amount of materials collected in filtration devices over the one year project

These records will help indicate our success in reducing debris and other pollutant flow into water areas.

Further, as the hope is for Hillsborough County water areas to be restored to natural conditions and pollution be minimized as soon as possible, the criteria used to determine whether this goal has been met, lies in the condition of those areas. We anticipate seeing:

1. Cleaner water areas, free from marine debris
2. Clearer waters, with less overgrowth and siltation
3. Odor reduction
4. Return of fish and other wildlife
5. Increased local usage of water areas for fishing, boating and other water activities
6. Community pride and stewardship

While we recognize that many of the above changes are long-term goals and won't all be readily apparent within a one year time frame, substantial improvement will be deemed progress towards ultimate goals.

4. Scope of Work: SOCs will continue and expand its WARM project to rehabilitate water areas in Hillsborough County by:

1. Identifying specific sites in Baycrest Park and Dana Shores as targets for the International Coastal Clean-up/ Florida Coastal Clean-up annually in September.

2. Forming teams to engage in other regular hands-on marine debris clean-ups.

RESULT- cleaner water areas, free from marine debris. Immediate remediation of one pollutant source.

3. Contracting experienced professionals to install and maintain debris filtration devices in the pilot project areas.

RESULT- reduction of pollutants in Hillsborough County water areas.

4. Developing and duplicating educational materials to dispense throughout Baycrest Park and Dana Shores neighborhoods and schools, businesses and civic organizations

RESULT- less contribution to pollution from general public and industry, and a stewardship ethic in the local community.

OVERALL RESULTS- return of wildlife to Hillsborough County water areas. A community that can again enjoy the local natural resources. Increased boating, fishing, wildlife watching and other water activities. Increased tourism and tax base.

5. Additional Information:

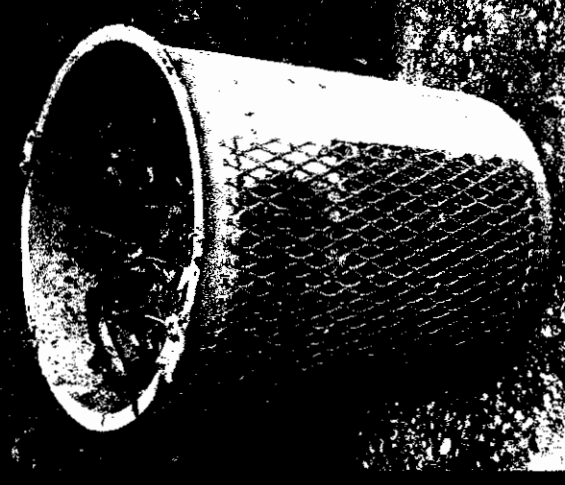
Enclosed also, please find:

1. Organizational details (Top 10 Questions and Answers)
2. Organizational history (The Founding of Save Our Canals)
3. Newspaper articles recognizing SOcS as a community force against water pollution

# Stormwater BMP (filtration device)

## Curb Inlet Baskets

- Reduces TSS, Organics, Hydrocarbons, Floatable Debris into Coastal Waters



# Pollutant Removal Efficiency

	Grate Inlet Skimmer Box
Trash & Litter	90% - 95%
Oil & Grease	54% - 96%
Sediments/TSS	73% - 93%
Organics	79.3%
Total Nitrogen	65% - 96%
Total Phosphorus	71% - 96%

# Save Our Canals!



## Save Our Canals' Top 10 Questions & Answers

8703 Cobblestone Dr. Tampa, FL 33615

**1. *What is Save Our Canals?*** Save Our Canals or SOcS, is a community action group dedicated to improving Hillsborough County water areas. SOcS mission is to remedy pollution in water areas of Hillsborough County and intends to work with various local, state, federal, private and non-profit entities to help promote environmental stewardship and prevent future degradation of local water resources.

**2. *Does SOcS only represent one community?*** SOcS is rapidly becoming a county-wide organization. The membership of SOcS currently includes homeowners' associations, businesses and individuals from the Old Tampa Bay region. Anyone interested in improving water quality is welcome to join SOcS.

**3. *Is SOcS affiliated with a particular political party?*** SOcS is a bi-partisan group. In fact, during the last Hillsborough County Commissioner elections, SOcS supported various candidates, with differing political backing. SOcS is committed to working with all interested parties to help purge water pollution.

**4. *Does SOcS only care about canals?*** The name SOcS was used by the first group of community leaders that established the organization. The intent was not to exclude any water areas in Hillsborough County, but came about primarily because the initial concerns voiced were about local canals. SOcS mission includes rehabilitation of various Hillsborough County water areas, like gullies, streams and drainage channels, but the name has remained.

**5. *What work does SOcS do?*** SOcS focuses on coordinating community efforts to rehabilitate local polluted water areas. Cooperating with existing entities, SOcS has begun testing the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), established neighborhood debris clean-ups and awareness programs to promote long term environmental improvements.

**6. *Aren't there other organizations that already do the same work?*** While there are a number of organizations that deal with water resources, none specifically focus on implementing BMPs to promote pollution reduction in Hillsborough County water areas. Further, SOcS is the only group poised to implement a comprehensive action plan that will coordinate efforts in local communities. SOcS efforts compliment other existing programs and strategic cooperation among the groups will greatly benefit Hillsborough County and the rest of Tampa Bay.

**7. *Is SOcS qualified to work on water areas?*** SOcS membership includes a number of professionals with significant experience on water issues. We have attorneys, engineers, doctors and more contributing their specialties. Also, SOcS has much help from a substantial number of caring community volunteers and business supporters.

**8. Is SOcS a non-profit organization?** SOcS received its 501c4 status this year and has filed for a sub company 501c3 to continue on charitable work. The review process is ongoing, and the organization is expecting to be granted charity non-profit status soon.

**9. How many people are involved with SOcS?** Currently SOcS has 10 homeowner's associations representing over 4500 homes, along with various individual members and businesses contributing to the group. Others have also stated intent to join in efforts and SOcS designed and will implement an aggressive program to further increase visibility and membership.

**10. Why should I support SOcS?** Historically, Hillsborough County has been a water-based community. People make homes here to enjoy life by The Bay: swimming, snorkeling/diving, boating, fishing, wildlife watching. Pollution is changing this. Some local waters are unsafe for swimming, wildlife is decreasing and our "Baylife" is at risk. SOcS coordinates groups and individuals from our area to focus on local water concerns. Working through a collaborative effort, SOcS can help revive our dying waters and restore community pride and stewardship. SOcS can set realistic goals for improved water quality and achieve them.

# Save Our Canals!



## The Founding of Save Our Canals

8703 Cobblestone Dr. Tampa, FL 33615

**Brian's story:** I bought my house in Baycrest in 1977. We used to catch fish and crabs off our backyard dock and have family barbeques. My kids grew up bird-watching, swimming and fishing in the waters by our house. Now the wildlife is gone. There is only trash in our canal. We don't dare allow our granddaughter near the muck for fear she'll get ill. The rapid decline of the water areas in Baycrest is so sad. We've lost so much enjoyment and there are very real health concerns.

**B.J.'s story:** (As told by his father, Brendan). My son was extremely ill and required major surgery. Doctors couldn't identify what was wrong. His lymph nodes behind his heart were inflamed. It took eight days in the hospital before the doctors narrowed it down. They quarantined us. We were in the cancer ward. We couldn't go near anybody. The bottom line is they had to cut through his ribs, deflate the lung, and get behind the heart to get a biopsy. I've shared this with every family that I can. I told them don't let kids swim in Tampa waters. There is a serious scar on my baby's chest because our canals are bad. I didn't know they were so polluted. BJ had his birthday party at our house. There were 30 kids in the backyard. Six of them had a dare. They went swimming. He got sick. He went in for five minutes -- I pulled him right out. It was cold because it was February. February is during the time when the bacteria are least, because it's not warm, yet he got sick. When I spoke to the infectious disease specialist, he said "we used to see this maybe three times a year." Now they're seeing it maybe three times a month. They never identified the bacteria that caused his problem. They sent it to Tallahassee, and to disease control in Atlanta. We still don't know what it was. Something needs to be done.

**Leon's story:** I've lived in Hillsborough County since I was six months old. As a boy I went fishing and crabbing in the Bay, and we weren't worried about eating the fish. Raccoons, otters and bobcats were often seen drinking from the creeks. They were common sites. Manatees and seahorses lived in the canals. You can't find a single seahorse now. These are part of our estuary, and somehow they've been forgotten. I've seen a faster decline in the environment in the last few years than any time in my life. I remember when the bottom was clear and the water was clean. Fish, manatees, turtles and minnows were easily visible and there were so many of the water birds that hunt them. With each passing year I have watched a decline in all of these species; some are gone completely. I recently noticed fish ailing in my own aquarium and remembered I hadn't cleaned the bottom. After siphoning the bottom, the water cleared, and the fish improved. That is exactly what these canals need....some maintenance. Most of the people that live on the canals don't have boats, don't even fish or swim in the canals. They pay higher prices and higher taxes just to look at and enjoy the wildlife, which each year is getting to be less. The water is murkier. Our daily existence -- our very lifestyle is at stake. We need to do better with our waters.

**Norm's story:** If some of you go back as many years as I do, you remember living with septic tanks. The basic function was to store waste from the house. They were at least mostly sealed and covered...still they were problematic and in the end have been generally replaced. Our storm sewers are now a conduit into new septic tanks...our canals and our Bay, and if you don't think that refuse is

Continued on reverse side >

in there, do what I did. Go down into the muck and take a sample of it. Take it to be tested...and find out the results are that concentrations are "too numerous to count at highest dilutions" in relation to fecal matter, and other pollutants. It takes me back a number of years when Uncle Sam decided to give me an all-expense-paid trip to the Philippines in the '40s -- accompanied by a few other thousand people. As we did our tour throughout World War II, we found out that we could identify the villages mainly by our nose before we could even see them. The reason for that was, surprisingly, the same things that we see today here in Hillsborough County...the canals that they used to channel water from storms. Fortunately for us, our tour guide was kind enough to place the skull and cross bones in most of the water areas there, because the bacteria was so dangerous that they couldn't even identify it in many cases. Our canals are getting close to that. It is so sad.

***Baycrest Park residents get together:*** In Baycrest, neighbors' children play together, residents walk their dogs, people jog, bike and rollerblade, providing frequent opportunities to discuss important local matters with one another. There are many accounts like those above in Baycrest. Eventually, the neighborhood discussions went from sharing experiences to a collective wish for action. Families decided that it was time to get together and help the community. Informal meetings of concerned neighbors became weekly events. They started calling themselves the SOCS...Save Our Canals team. More people started attending and sharing ideas on what to do. It seemed likely that other areas were experiencing similar problems and might also have concerns about water safety, environmental and recreational issues.

***Outreach to other communities:*** Baycrest residents told their friends and relatives about the SOCS meetings and troubles with the local canals. Soon people from other nearby areas became involved. They too expressed worries about water areas in their neighborhoods. Apparently not just canals were polluted, but also drainage channels, gullies and more. Hillsborough County water areas generally are overgrown, strewn with garbage and filled with putrid muck. The suggestion for a more formal, organized group for residents that want to engage on water resource matters was met with much approval.

***1<sup>st</sup> meeting in Hillsborough County Public Library:*** The SOCS team met in the evening and spent hours detailing a plan for establishing an organization to serve as a voice for Hillsborough County residents on water pollution matters. A sign-up sheet listed all those committed to involvement and preliminary funding. Next steps included finding a Board of Directors and Officers for the soon-to-be formal corporation.

***Volunteer board members & officers:*** The SOCS team requested volunteers from each involved community to accept a seat on the Board of Directors and also appointed a President and Vice President by consensus. The initial Board consisted of 4 members and 2 of the founding individuals became President and Vice President.

***Information gathering:*** SOCS started collecting information on how to get involved with promoting good water quality in Hillsborough County. Members researched existing programs, pulled newspaper articles, reviewed science, spoke to long time residents and formed a professional team to answer questions and craft an action plan.

***Incorporated:*** With backing from members, Board and officers, on July 22, 2004, Save Our Canals, Inc. was officially incorporated under Florida State law. The existence of a formal organization seemed to further rally neighbors around the cause and allowed a mechanism for submitting funding applications to support future work.

***Presentations at Hillsborough County Commission meetings:*** Requesting some allocation of budget funds from the Hillsborough County Commission for pollution remediation in water areas of Hillsborough County seemed a logical plan for SOCs. Various members gave public testimony at 3 different Budget Public Hearings in Tampa: on June 17<sup>th</sup>, September 9<sup>th</sup> and September 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2004. During those hearings, SOCS members had the opportunity to speak with Commissioners and meet County staff. SOCS received direction on how to help improve Hillsborough County water quality.

***Growing membership and support:*** SOCS wanted to continue community outreach to broaden membership and raise awareness about polluted water areas. The First National Bank, through Ms. Vivian O' Shea, stepped up to sponsor SOCs. The Bank generously provided support to SOCS for various meetings and continues to be involved with projects. Also, homeowners' associations, individual members and local businesses contributed annual membership dues to SOCS to help pay for supplies and other necessities. Officers and Board members started receiving invitations to speak at local clubs and facilities, and SOCs was featured in Town and Country News and also in the Tampa Tribune. Neighborhood newsletters included features about SOCs with membership applications. The organization was growing.

***New Improvements:*** As SOCS expanded, new members brought more talent and input. SOCS redesigned its logo, changed its acronym to SOcS (to symbolize an "SOS" signal), and tasked certain board members with specific duties (for example membership or media). The Board began meeting regularly and general meetings had detailed agendas and minutes. The organization became more focused and experienced.

***Cooperative efforts:*** SOcS reaches out to existing programs to coordinate efforts, for example with Adopt a Pond, Tampa Bay Estuary Program, and scientists at the University of South Florida. There are limited resources available for water quality initiatives and our community needs strategic planning and cooperation to maximize benefits. SOcS will work with local, state, federal, private and non-profit entities to help promote environmental stewardship and prevent future degradation of local water resources.

***Action plan:*** SOcS develops a pilot project to help remedy debris problems from stormwater outflows, test water quality in discrete locations and craft a feasibility study for further long term management of target water areas. The SOcS plan is dubbed the Water Area Restoration and Maintenance project...or WARM for short. SOcS is now collecting resources and refining pilot project implementation plans to "Get WARM" in Hillsborough County.

***SOcS granted PRF funds for WARM Phase I project:*** The Hillsborough County Commission approved \$41,000.00 to partially fund the SOcS WARM project Phase I. (please see attached press release).

***SOcS implementing action plan:*** Since the time of the PRF award, SOcS has been busily implementing its WARM plan. Materials explaining current laws and proper disposal techniques for lawn clippings, pet wastes and chemicals were developed and dispensed. Various members made presentations to homeowner's associations, clubs and other organizations. Clean-ups have been planned and begin following summer months.

***SOcS nominated for "Moral Courage" award":*** Each year, individuals or groups are nominated by the community for having courage to challenge government on important matters. After only one year

of existence, SOcS was nominated by local families for this prestigious award. SOcS was in the top three finalists.

***SOcS requests County help:*** For months SOcS suggested to the County Commissioners that there be a community advisory body established to improve communications between citizens and the County Commissioners regarding water pollution matters. At their April 27, 2005 session, Hillsborough County Commissioners approved the development of a community task force to provide recommendations on solutions to water pollution problems. In addition, the Commissioners requested scientific information be compiled and collected on the current status of water and sediment to help determine appropriate action. These measures were finalized at the County Commission's July 20, 2005 meeting.

***SOcS ready to implement WARM Phase II:*** SOcS's success in enacting its WARM plan Phase I established a foundation for continuation and expansion of the project. A survey was completed by volunteers to determine another area of high stormwater contribution that might benefit from new filtration and trapping devices. SOcS intends to continue maintenance of those traps in the original pilot area and install and maintain new devices in another area: Dana Shores. Further, SOcS plans to ramp up education efforts and hands on clean-ups to fulfill needs of a complete program.

7-23-05

# Commission OKs Study On Canals

## RESIDENTS, COUNTY TO WORK TOGETHER

By JULIE PACE  
jpace@tampatrib.com

TAMPA — The county commission took another step forward Wednesday in the slow process of cleaning up the county's canals and determining who is responsible for the pollution.

The board approved a comprehensive canal dredging and preventative maintenance feasibility study Wednesday that will examine 61 miles of canals in the Town 'N Country and Apollo Beach areas. A joint task force of residents and county staffers recommended the study to the board.

The \$281,000 project will study each of the county's major canal areas, testing sediment levels, options and costs for removing the sediment, as well as the cause of the build-ups that have had residents appealing to the board for action for more than a year.

A group of eight residents representing neighborhood associations have been selected for a canal advisory committee that will work on the study with county staff.

Three of the residents —

Joel Cooper, Kevin Kremkau and George Martin — are members of Save Our Canals, an organization formed last year. The group represents about 4,500 households that want the county to include a long-term dredging and pollution cleanup program in next year's operating budget.

Save Our Canals President Brian Garry said the county isn't properly maintaining canals, swales and other waterways, and that has led to health and safety concerns. Garry, however, said more studies are a waste of time and money. Taxpayer money would be better spent on cleaning up canals, he said.

"We have dredging engineers. We have environmental attorneys. We've looked at study after study," Garry said. "We don't want to keep studying the issue."

Bob Gordon, director of the county's public works department, defended the need for the study, saying there is little data on canal pollution at this point. Gordon said the results of the study are expected in 18 months.

Reporter Michael Dunn contributed to this report. Reporter Julie Pace can be reached at (813) 865-1505.

S U B S C R I B E R S

# Dredging Study Approved

## SILT AND SEDIMENT CLOGGING CANALS

By LIZ BLEAU  
ebleau@tampatrib.com

**TAMPA** — Residents living along 164 miles of canals that are clogged with silt and sediment got a boost Wednesday in their efforts to get the county to dredge and maintain the waterways.

County commissioners adopted a recommendation from staff to embark on a \$281,000, 18-month study of the residential canals.

Public Works Director Bob Gordon said staff will analyze the sediment and, if possible, find out what it is and where it's coming from.

The source of the sediment is a major issue for residents who believe much of the silt flows into the canals with stormwater runoff. The canals serve as part of the county's stormwater drainage system.

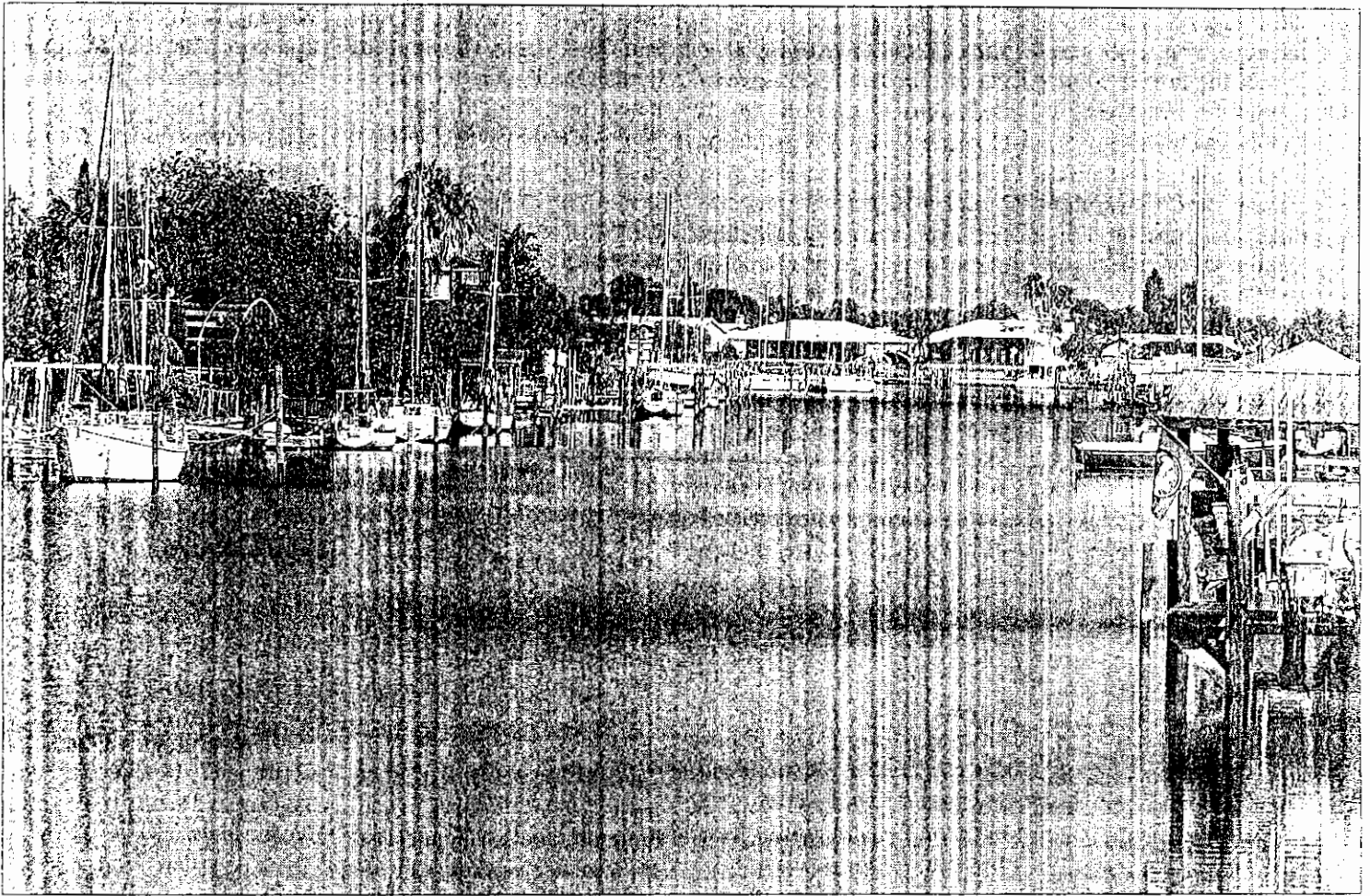
Some residents say because of that, the county should pay to remove the sediment.

The canals, mostly in Town 'N Country and south Hillsborough County, are part of subdivisions built 30 or more years ago, when no provisions were made for the maintenance of the waterways. In some areas the canals have become impassable for some boats due to the buildup of sediment.

The study also will determine cost estimates and look at possible funding sources for a dredging and maintenance program.

Brian Garry, president of the Save Our Canals environmental group in

**See DREDGING STUDY, Page 12 ►**  
*Back to the drawing board.*



Tribune file photo by KATHY MOORE

The canals are in subdivisions that were built 30 or more years ago, when there were no provisions for waterway maintenance. The county study will determine cost estimates and look at possible funding sources for a dredging and maintenance program.

## DREDGING STUDY

Continued From Page 1

northwest Hillsborough, said his group has analyzed waterfront property taxes in nine neighborhoods and found that waterfront property owners pay much more than comparable off-water properties.

"We think we are paying our

fair share and we want a fair share of services," Garry told the commissioners.

Garry also asked that Save Our Canals' lawyer, Marianne Cufone, be included on a 17-member canal advisory committee.

The commission adopted the advisory committee make-up at its June meeting. At the time, they balked at approving a canal study because the cost estimate was about \$400,000.

Commissioners sent staff

back to the drawing board, asking for less-expensive alternatives. The study they approved Wednesday will cost \$281,000, the most expensive and comprehensive of three plans Gordon submitted.

The commission also appointed Cufone to the advisory panel.

Other neighborhood representatives named to the committee from south county are Stephanie Flatt, Apollo Beach; Pete Johnson, Gibsonton; and

Dolly Cummings, Ruskin.

From northwest Hillsborough are George Martin, Dana Shores; Keyin Kremkau, Bay Crest Park; Joel Cooper, Bay Port Colony; and Jack Berlin, Sweetwater Creek.

Representatives from the county's Citizen's Advisory Committee, county staff and representatives from other agencies also are on the panel.

Reporter Liz Bleau can be reached at (813) 865-1557.

# Canal Cleanup Group Vows To Press On

## ISSUE REFERRED TO ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

By NATALIE CAMPISI  
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Members of a Town 'N Country-based group are vowing to fight on, despite a thumbs down from county representatives to their plan for cleaning up local canals.

Save Our Canals, a group founded in May by Town 'N Country resident Brian Garry, proposed the county add a \$100,000 line item in the 2005 budget. The money would fund research to determine which canals need dredging and how many canals, if any, contain toxic water.

Commissioner Jim Norman made the motion to set aside

county dollars in support of this effort, seconded by Commissioner Kathy Castor. Commissioners Thomas Scott, Ronda Storms, Jan Platt and Pat Frank voted down the motion. Commissioner Ken Hagan did not attend the Sept. 9 commission meeting.

Members of the canals group argued that because many canals have not been dredged for years, silting has occurred making the waters unsafe for swimming or fishing as well as creating sandbars prohibiting boats from navigating through them.

Platt, who opposes the use of tax dollars for the maintenance of the canals, said that the canals are not the responsibility of Hillsborough County, but of the property owners.

"If we dredged these canals, it would cost millions upon

millions of dollars. It would break the bank. I believe if you choose to live on a canal, and I would not personally buy property on a canal, then it's up to you to maintain that," Platt said.

Norman likened the canals to a golden goose.

"You can't just keep taking and taking. You have to invest in your investments. If we make the investment in the canals, property value goes up and the county eventually reaps the benefits. We can't just stand by and let these properties deteriorate. For a long time, we turned our backs, we walked away, we said that this problem doesn't exist," said Norman.

They may have lost the battle, but the war is not over, said Garry.

"We're going at them again. We'll keep going at them until

something's done. If we have to, we'll go back after them in March for the 2006 budget."

Part of the canal group's strategy for achieving its goal is to recruit more members throughout Tampa.

"These commissioners are going to take notice when they realize that these people are not only taxpayers, but voters. There are a lot of people on the water. And these people have influence," said Garry.

Storms motioned to refer the matter of the canals to the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County (EPC) to develop a pilot program, using Pollution Recovery Fund grant money that would explore options on cleaning up the canals. Commissioners unanimously voted to pass the motion,

See CANALS, Page 16

## SHERIFF'S LOG

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BRIEF

# CANALS

Continued From Page 4

referring the problem of the canals to the EPC for further analysis.

The dilemma over whose responsibility it is to shoulder the financial responsibilities of maintaining the canals is the watershed issue in the canal debate. Although the Tampa Port Authority owns the majority of the bottoms of the 42 miles of canal along the coast of Tampa, the authority is not legally obligated to maintain the canals, said Lori Musser, spokeswoman for the Tampa Port Authority.

"This is a very complicated issue. Historically, property owners have taken care of their canals. The only dredging TPA sponsors is for the

Federal Channel. We give permits for dredging in Hillsborough County, but we don't finance the dredging," said Musser.

Rick Garrity, a spokesperson for the EPC, advised the county commission on the health and safety aspects of the canals at the hearing. According to Garrity, cleaning the canals is an issue that needs to be looked at carefully.

"A lot of these canals, the finger-fill canals, just don't flush well. They were formed on a natural coastline and filled in by what was dredged so there's nowhere for the water to go, it's motionless. Still water leads to poor water quality, natural silting and then the storm water runoff

exacerbates it. That's another issue altogether," said Garrity.

Garrity acknowledges the canals are ripe for discussion, but he said that there are many major problems left unresolved, such as the problem of where to put all the sediment and spoil material that's been dredged. At this point, Garrity has no answers.

"The EPC is going to meet in October to discuss the problem of the canals. We're looking at it from a health and environmental perspective. We can't just do this huge dredging. We have to see how it might affect the wetlands and the environment," said Garrity.

## Picnic Island Water Off-Limits

TAMPA — City officials have closed Picnic Island beach to swimmers this weekend, the third closing this summer.

Health department officials found high levels of bacteria in the water.

Picnic Island Park remains open, but signs have been posted notifying people to stay out of the water, and lifeguards will instruct them not to swim.

Health department officials will test the water Monday.

Ben T. Davis beach remains open for swimming.

*Michael H. Samuels*

## Sewer Line Work Closes Road

TAMPA — People who drive on Countryway Boulevard between Waters and Linebaugh avenues will have to find a different route this weekend.

That's because the road will be closed from Bennington Drive to Glenfield Avenue until 6 a.m. Monday as work is done on a sewer line under the roadway.

"We have to get in there and tear out the whole line under the road and replace it," said Steve Valdez, spokesman for Hillsborough County. "This job is badly needed."

Local residents will have access to their roads, but the stretch from Bennington to Glenfield will be closed to all traffic.

Work will be done on the sewer line all weekend to get the road open by early Monday, Valdez said. That could change, however, if bad weather or other complications arise, he added.

*Rob Shaw*

ACR

HILLSBOROUGH

## High Bacteria Levels Close Ben T. Davis Beach

TAMPA — Beach patrons can look, but they better not touch — or go swimming for that matter.

Due to high bacteria counts, the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department late Tuesday closed Ben T. Davis Beach, parks spokeswoman Linda J. Carlo said. Signs have been posted along the beach, and staff is on duty to alert the public, Carlo said.

The high bacteria is believed to be caused by recent heavy rains that have brought polluted stormwater runoff into the waters around the public beach off Courtney Campbell Parkway.

The Hillsborough County Health Department is monitoring the water quality through testing.

Carlo said the beach water was retested Wednesday, and results should be available after 5 p.m. today. If the bacteria counts are still high, the beach will remain closed to swimmers through the weekend.

*Sean C. Ledig*

South Tampa Beach

## NEWS IN BRIEF

HILLSBOROUGH

### Swimming Not Allowed At Picnic Island Beach

TAMPA — High levels of the Enterococcus bacteria have closed Picnic Island Beach to swimmers this weekend, according to the Hillsborough County Health Department and the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department.

People will be allowed to sunbathe and picnic at the park, but they should not enter the water, a news release says.

Signs have been posted and staff is on duty to monitor the beach during the holiday weekend.

Bacterial levels have not affected Ben T. Davis Beach, which is open for swimming.

The health department will test the water Tuesday, and results will be available Wednesday, the release says.

## Don't Use Bay Bottom

Nanette Holland's commentary (May 23) was an excellent look at the bay and how improvements have been made. The article presents data on where we have been and some improvements that can be made in the future. Concerning the future, I have a problem with one of the proposals: the use of bay bottom to fill in deep man-made holes in seagrass beds.

Bay bottom contains phosphate and iron, and that can promote the growth of algae — including toxic blooms like red tide or a growth of Cyanobacteria, which can smother seagrasses. Phosphate is already in abundance in Tampa Bay, but iron is not. We often see iron as a limiting factor for algal blooms. Therefore, adding it to the shallow waters of Tampa Bay would initiate the growth of algae.

Bay bottom also contains organic matter, much like a dense soup of waste molecules. This organic soup allows the growth of excessive bacteria and a variety of nematode worms to flourish. This type of growth is very unhealthy in the waters of the bay site.

I hope the National Estuary Program will reconsider the use of bay bottom in bay holes. Perhaps there are better ways to fill the holes.

**J. NICHOLAS EHRINGER**  
Seffner

*The writer is a professor of biology at Hillsborough Community College, Brandon Campus.*

# Town & Country



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