

History of Hillsborough County Water Issues

History Of Events Leading To Creation Of Tampa Bay Water

Focusing on Issues of Interest to Hillsborough County

KEY to ABBREVIATIONS:

mgd: million gallons per
day

SWFWMD: Southwest
Florida Water Management
District

WCRWSA: West Coast
Regional Water Supply
Authority

1930: Pinellas Water Company (acquired by City of St. Petersburg in 1940) begins production from the Cosme Well Field located in the Keystone area of northwest Hillsborough County.

1952: City of St. Petersburg adds the Odessa portion (also in Keystone area) to the Cosme Well Field, creating what will then be known as the "Cosme-Odessa" Well Field.

1955: Development interests begin the construction of a water system in Brandon.

1956: Pinellas County Water System begins production from the Eldridge-Wilde Well Field located partly in northwest Hillsborough, and partly in northeast Pinellas County.

1961: Florida State Legislature creates the [Southwest Florida Water Management District](#), with the main objective being flood control.

1961: Sun City Center potable water supply system becomes operational.

1962: The quantity of water pumped from the Cosme-Odessa Well Field reaches an annual average of 19.5 mgd. St. Petersburg develops a new well field ("Section 21" well field), also in northwest Hillsborough County .

1963: City of St. Petersburg's Section 21 Well Field, located in northwest Hillsborough County, goes on-line.

1970: Hillsborough County acquires the River Oaks production wells in Northwest Hillsborough County.

1970: Potable water supply to the Gibsonton-Riverview area (7 production wells) begins.

1970: Two production wells to serve the Ruskin area become operational (Little Manatee Utility Company).

1972: The State Water Resources Act directs the water management districts to formulate an integrated, coordinated plan for the use and development of the waters of the State.

1972: The City of St. Petersburg is pumping 17.5 mgd annual average from Cosme-Odessa and 16.6 mgd annual average from Section 21. Pinellas County is pumping 35.5 mgd from Eldridge-Wilde.

1972: Public hearings are held in Northwest Hillsborough about over-pumping. [SWFWMD](#) issues Order 72-1 placing regulatory levels on the Floridan Aquifer at Cosme-Odessa and Section 21. This matter goes all the way to the [Florida Supreme Court](#), which upholds the setting of regulatory levels.

1972: A total of 19 production wells owned by three private utilities (Brandon Water Company, Meade Utilities, and Southern Utilities) are producing water from the Brandon area with a rated capacity of 11.7 mgd.

1973: The City of St. Petersburg begins pumping from a new well field, this time in South Pasco, roughly one mile north of the Hillsborough County line.

1974: [Florida Statute Chapter 373](#) creates the vehicle by which regional water supply authorities can be formed, and initiates the permitting process for water development through the water management districts. Water is said to belong to the State, and permits are to be required for reasonable and beneficial use. County boundaries are not an impediment to the development of supplies under this statute. Subsequent SWFWMD rules require that only off-site impacts be considered.

1974: The West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority is formed via the "Five Party Agreement" of October 25, 1974.

Key aspects include:

1. that it be operated like a "cooperative", in that WCRWSA would develop supplies based upon a member government's requests, to be paid for by that member government alone;
2. that there be five voting members;
3. that members got to keep their existing well fields;
4. that each new well field developed by WCRWSA would have its own bonds and its own cost per thousand gallons of water;
5. that new well fields be funded on "take or pay" agreements.

Originally viewed as a way of providing donor counties like Hillsborough with at least some voice in what happens within its boundaries, given that WCRWSA was to develop water supplies while minimizing adverse environmental effects. Hillsborough County has no initial entitlements.

1976: Hillsborough County acquires Tampa Suburban, Lakewood, and Plantation production wells in northwest Hillsborough County.

1976: Production from the Cypress Creek Well Field in central Pasco begins.

1976: SWFWMD issues a consumptive use permit for Cosme-Odessa for an annual average of 19 mgd, and a consumptive use permit for Section 21 with an annual average of 18 mgd.

1977: Hillsborough County acquires Cherry Creek, Sun Lake Park, Northdale, Carrollwood Meadows, Country Place, Fairway Village, Henderson Road, and Woodbriar production wells in northwest Hillsborough County.

1978: Hillsborough County acquires Carrollwood Village and Northlakes production wells in northwest Hillsborough County.

1978: City of Tampa begins production from the Morris Bridge Well field, located in the north-central part of Hillsborough County.

1980: Production from the Cross Bar Ranch Well Field in central Pasco begins.

1980: Hillsborough County signs an agreement with WCRWSA making WCRWSA the County's "sole agent" for water supply development. Hillsborough is the only County which has this agreement. This agreement also required the County to support WCRWSA's efforts to obtain the necessary environmental permits. Hillsborough is the only member government which will not have its own, large, permitted facilities in addition to facilities owned by WCRWSA.

1980: Hillsborough County acquires Rocky Creek production wells in northwest Hillsborough County.

1981: Hillsborough County acquires Crippenwood production well in northwest Hillsborough County, bringing the total permitted average day capacity for all the Hillsborough County wells in northwest Hillsborough to 7.6 mgd.

1981: Actual average day use from the Brandon, Riverview, Sun City Center and Ruskin production wells is 11.68 mgd.

1982: A total of 25 production wells is now providing water to the Brandon area.

1982: Hillsborough County acquires the 9 production wells of the Big Bend Utility Company, serving Apollo Beach.

1984: WCRWSA obtains a consumptive use permit for the Northwest Hillsborough Regional Well field (7 wells) at 8.8 mgd. Most of the old, sub-division wells begin to be phased out.

1984: Consumptive use permits for Cosme-Odesa and Section 21 are renewed by SWFWMD, this time at an annual average of 13 mgd, to be reduced to 12 mgd once Northwest Hillsborough Regional Well Field is fully operational

1985: Average day demands from the Brandon, Riverview, Sun City Center and Ruskin systems is up to 15.4 mgd. The average day demands for the northwest part of Hillsborough County are 10.5 mgd. (This latter demand number places Hillsborough County in the position of having to purchase surplus water from entitlements owned by Pinellas County and St. Petersburg from WCRWSA well fields in Pasco County).

1987: WCRWSA obtains consumptive use permit for the South Central Hillsborough Regional Well Field (17 production wells) at 24.1 mgd. Most of the old, sub-division wells begin to be phased out.

1988: WCRWSA acquires the Cone Ranch as part of a bankruptcy proceeding. Only Hillsborough County expresses an interest in paying for this purchase. Hillsborough County takes title to the property, with WCRWSA retaining the rights to develop a water supply on the property for Hillsborough County.

1989: Significant revisions are made to SWFWMD's Water Use Permitting Rules. Of major significance is the fact that unacceptable adverse impacts on-site as well as off-site are now to be regulated.

1991: Substantial changes are to be made to the Five Party Agreement. The new agreement gave Hillsborough County entitlements to approximately 28 percent of WCRWSA's permitted water. Hillsborough now has "excess entitlement" as opposed to having to purchase water from Pinellas and St. Petersburg-owned entitlements.

1993-94: WCRWSA produces a "Resource Development Plan", which leads to the first Master Water Plan's being adopted by WCRWSA Board in 1995

1995: Master Water Plan adopted by WCRWSA Board. The projects were:

1995-97: Tampa/Hillsborough Interconnect

1995-97: Cypress Bridge Well Field Interconnect

1995-97: Morris Bridge Interconnect

1995-00: Cypress Bridge Permit Increase by 4 mgd

1995-00: Tampa Bypass Canal Linear Well Field at 10 mgd

1995-00: North-Central Hillsborough Intertie

1995-00: Industrial/Agricultural Exchange at 12 mgd

1995-00: South-Central Hillsborough Intertie

1995-00: Brandon Urban Well Field at 12 mgd

1995-96: Hillsborough County, Pasco County, and SWFWMD join together to oppose water use permit renewals for three St. Petersburg-owned (WCRWSA managed) well fields in northwest Hillsborough County and south Pasco County, the so-called "Four Well Fields Case" (note the fourth well field was the Northwest Hillsborough Regional Well Field which the County was not in opposition to). Pinellas County, St. Petersburg, and WCRWSA were on the other side of the issue.

1996: A Draft Recommended Order from Administrative Law Judge contains opinions which concern parties for both sides. The draft states that the impacts to northwest Hillsborough from the pumping were "adverse by any definition of the term". The draft also states that the SWFWMD knew of these adverse impacts, but allowed them to continue. The draft recommended the four well fields have their permits renewed at the existing average being pumped (this would have resulted in slight reductions at Cosme-Odesa and Section 21 Well Fields).

1996: Florida State Legislature directs WCRWSA to evaluate its current operation and make recommendations for improvement by February 1997. The Group of 18 convenes to examine WCRWSA amidst an atmosphere of likely challenges to the Order from the Four Well Fields Case, along with rumblings from Tallahassee of possible action to "fix the problem". Five options to modify WCRWSA are placed on the table for discussion:

1. Dismantle the Authority, and each member will develop their own future supplies.
2. Retain the status quo.
3. Keep existing contracts intact, with future supplies being developed system-wide.
4. Dissolve existing contracts, and have the Authority acquire member facilities, with all supplies treated as part of a single system.
5. Dissolve existing contracts, expand the Authority, and have current supplies served system-wide based, but new supplies to be developed on a subscription basis.

1996: Cypress Bridge Well Field (permitted in June, 1990) finally comes completely on-line, permitted at 8 mgd annual average.

1996: Hillsborough County proposes an option to re-structure WCRWSA which would have allowed WCRWSA to continue to operate the regional well fields (Cypress Creek, Cross Bar, Cypress Bridge), "owned" by multiple member governments, but would have allowed members to be free to develop their own future supplies alone, or in cooperation with one or more member governments or WCRWSA. The motion does not carry.

1997: The Local Source First Legislation passes, requiring our three-county area to exhaust all feasible local sources before moving outside the three-county area for water.

1997: Lengthy, complex negotiations continue on the re-structuring of WCRWSA amidst continued interest from Tallahassee to fix the problem for the members if they could not come to terms themselves.

1998: Member sign: the Amended and Restated Interlocal Agreement, Master Water Supply Contract, and the Partnership Plan with SWFWMD.

A Consolidated Water Use Permit is issued by SWFWMD.

A "new" Master Water Plan is approved, and the WCRWSA is now [Tampa Bay Water](#).

Tampa Bay Water:

1. Operates more like a true utility, with all members paying the same for water, regardless where it comes from.
2. There are nine voting members
3. The majority rules on most items and can bind all members to pay costs;
4. No member owns well fields. All are owned by Tampa Bay Water.
5. Tampa Bay Water commits to develop at least 85 mgd of new supplies by Dec. 31, 2007, and to reduce pumping from the 11 central system well fields to no more than 90 mgd total, down from the previously permitted 192 mgd.

2000-05: Cone Ranch and Dispersed Wells at 12 mgd

2000-05: Hillsborough Bay Resource Exchange at 35 mgd

Loop 72inch Transmission main

Alternative projects were: Brackish water desalination at 4 to 20 mgd

Hillsborough River High Water at 15 to 25 mgd

Seawater desalination at 20 to 50 mgd