



Enhancing Source Water Protection at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo

Our mission to “connect people with the living earth” means we try to inspire every visitor to make a difference. We aim to do this by showing guests how they can. Water usage is one way everyone can be involved with conservation. We use a great deal of water at the Zoo- for our exhibits, visitors, and animals. The Zoo is learning how to improve our water management to protect water quality for our community.

Walking along Zoo Boulevard, you can see Lake Sharon, the Zoo's largest retention pond. Engineers designed Lake Sharon more than twenty years ago. Its purpose is to protect nearby Hamilton Creek from untreated zoo run off. Hamilton Creek flows directly into the Hillsborough River, which is the source for Tampa's drinking water. At the time of construction, Lake Sharon met all of the water management standards. As the protections for drinking water increased, the Zoo tried to keep Lake Sharon from flooding. On occasion, heavy rains would cause it to overflow. This sent untreated wastewater into Hamilton Creek.

To solve this problem, we reached out to Tampa Bay Water for help. They provided grant funding to the Zoo. The grant allowed us to design and build a structure that would allow Lake Sharon to hold more water. The weir, a structure that controls the flow of water, was raised. This new device will prevent overflow into Hamilton Creek. The zoo completed construction this spring. Since then, there have been no overflows of untreated water from Lake Sharon into Hamilton Creek.

We will soon start a new project with the City of Tampa and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. This project will study ways to better manage water resources at the Zoo. Funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will allow us to share the lessons we learn with our community. We hope to promote water conservation to our neighbors and visitors.

Before and after look at the new structure that will prevent overflow of untreated water into the Hillsborough River.



Zoo Boulevard, guests view of Lake Sharon



Special Thanks to:



WATERMATTERS.ORG · 1-800-423-1476

