

# CHARING the COURSE

T H E C O M P R E H E N S I V E C O N S E R V A T I O N
A N D M A N A G E M E N T P L A N F O R T A M P A B A Y
M A Y 2 O O 6

#### TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

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# Charting the Course for Tampa Bay

May 2006

THE MISSION OF THE TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM IS TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS TO RESTORE AND PROTECT TAMPA BAY THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF A SCIENTIFICALLY SOUND, COMMUNITY-BASED MANAGEMENT PLAN.

In memory of our friend and colleague, Roy G. Harrell, Jr.,
Tampa Bay Estuary Program Policy Board member (1992-1996), champion and
author of the landmark Interlocal Agreement for bay restoration
adopted in 1997.



# **PREFACE**

This first revision of *Charting the Course* encompasses the 2003-2008 timeframe. It provides a look back at progress made in implementing the original goals and priorities of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Tampa Bay, and a look ahead at updated bay restoration and protection strategies. *Charting the Course* is intended to provide a flexible, evolving framework that can be adapted to the changing needs of both the bay and the bay management community.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) was established by Congress in 1991 to assist the region in developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for bay improvement. The Program is a partnership of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Southwest Florida Water Management District; Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee counties; and the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater.

The revised Action Plans for bay improvement presented in this document reflect input from bay managers, advocates, key industries and citizens from throughout the region. The actions within this Plan were reviewed and refined by outside experts as well as members of TBEP's Technical Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Committee. Final Action Plans were approved by TBEP's Management and Policy Boards over a 2-year period. We thank all the individuals who participated for their substantial insights and contributions.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program invites your comments and participation as we continue to assist the region in charting the course for the future well-being of Tampa Bay.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Tampa Bay Estuary Program	VIII
About Charting the Course	IX
Partners of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program	XI
State of the Bay	1
Goals and Priorities for Tampa Bay	18
Introduction to Action Plans (See complete index of Action Plans, page IV)	20
Water & Sediment Quality Action Plan	22
Bay Habitats Action Plan	75
Bay Fish & Wildlife Action Plan	96
Dredging & Dredged Material Management Action Plan	111
Spill Prevention & Response Action Plan	115
Invasive Species Action Plan (New)	120
Public Education & Involvement Action Plan	124
Public Access Action Plan (New)	129
Implementation & Financing	132
Research and Monitoring Priorities	138
General References	144
Glossary	148
List of Acronyms	150



# INDEX OF ACTION PLANS AND ACTIONS FOR TAMPA BAY

WATER	& SEDIMENT	<b>QUALITY</b>
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Actions	to	improve	overall	water	auality	ν:

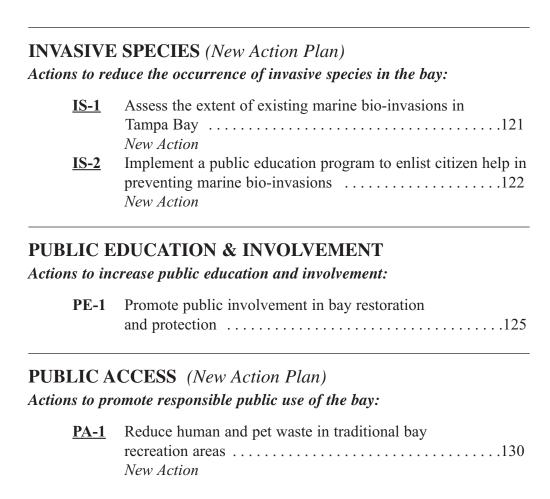
_	
WQ-1	Implement the Tampa Bay nitrogen management strategy23
-	Reduce pollution from recreational boaters28
	New Action – Includes Steps from TX-3, PH-3 & SP-3
Actions to red	uce pollution from stormwater runoff:
SW-1	Continue support for Florida Yards & Neighborhoods
	Program and similar pollution prevention initiatives30
	Assist businesses in implementing best management
	practices to reduce stormwater pollution, and develop model
	landscaping guidelines for commercial use32
<b>SW-3</b>	Encourage local governments to adopt integrated pest
	management policies and implement environmentally
	beneficial landscaping practices
	Reduce impervious paved surfaces
	Action Retired- Incorporated into SW-10
<del>SW-5</del>	Require older properties being redeveloped to meet
	current stormwater treatment standards for that portion
	of the site being redeveloped
	Action Retired- Incorporated into SW-10
	Promote compact urban development and redevelopment
	Action Retired – Incorporated into SW-10 Enforce and require the timely completion of the
S VV - 1	Enforce and require the timely completion of the consent order for the cleanup of fertilizer facilities in
	the East Bay sector
SW-8	Encourage best management practices on farms38
	Improve compliance with agricultural ground and
211 >	surface water management plans
	Action Retired
<b>SW-10</b>	Design and implement a Low Impact Development
	strategy
	New Action – Includes Steps from SW-4, SW-5 & SW-6
<u>SW-11</u>	Expand the Adopt-A-Pond program to additional
	communities
	New Action
Actions to red	uce the effects of air pollution on the bay:
AD-1	Continue atmospheric deposition studies to better
1117-1	understand the relationship between air and water
	quality

AD-2	Promote public and business energy conservation	
Actions to red	luce pollution from wastewater discharged to the bay:	
WW-1	Expand the use of reclaimed water where reuse benefits	
WW-2	the bay	
WW_3	served by septic systems	
	discharges	
<del>WW-4</del>	Revise HRS rules to incorporate environmental performance or design standards for septic systems Action Retired – Incorporated into WW-2	
ctions to rec	luce toxic contaminants in the bay:	
TX-1 TX-2	Improve opportunities for proper hazardous waste	
TX-3	disposal	
tions to red	luce pathogens:	
PH-1 PH-2	1	
PH-3	beaches and waters	
AY HABI	TATS	
tions to inc healthy ba	rease and preserve the number and diversity y habitats:	
BH-1	Implement the Tampa Bay master plan for habitat	
BH-2	restoration and protection	
ВН-3	Tampa Bay, and identify priority sites for mitigation80	
D11-3	Reduce propeller scarring of seagrass and pursue seagrass restoration opportunities at select sites83	
BH-4	r	
<del>BH-5</del>	Improve management of parking and vehicle access along causeways and coastal areas	
	Action Retired – Incorporated into PA-1	





BH-6	Encourage waterfront residents to enhance shorelines and limit runoff from yards89	
<del>BH-7</del>	Improve compliance with and enforcement of wetland	
	permits  Action Patinal Incompared into PH 2	
BH-8	Action Retired – Incorporated into BH-2 Expand habitat mapping and monitoring programs	
D11-0	Expand habitat mapping and monitoring programs	
	tablish and preserve adequate freshwater inflows to and its tributaries:	
FI-1	Maintain minimum seasonal freshwater	
	flows downstream of dams93	
FISH & W	TLDLIFE	
Actions to pr	otect and enhance fisheries and wildlife:	
FW-1	Increase on-water enforcement of environmental	
	regulations	
	Establish and enforce manatee protection zones100	
	Support bay scallop restoration	
F W-4	Assess the need to investigate the cumulative impacts of power plant entrainment on fisheries	
FW-5	Continue and expand the Critical Fisheries Monitoring	
2 ,, 0	Program	
<u>FW-6</u>	Preserve the diversity and abundance of bay wildlife 108  New Action	
DREDGIN	G & DREDGED MATERIAL MANAGEMENT	
Actions to red material man	duce the impact of dredging and improve dredged agement:	
DR-1	Manage dredging and dredged material in Tampa Bay 112	
SPILL PR	EVENTION & RESPONSE	
Actions to im	prove spill prevention and response:	
SP-1	Establish an integrated vessel traffic system for	
	Tampa Bay and permanently fund the PORTS system116	
SP-2	Evaluate and update spill response plans for priority areas	
SP-3		
<b>D1</b> - <b>J</b>	pleasure boaters	
	Action Retired – Incorporated into WQ-2	







# ABOUT THE TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

The Tampa Bay National Estuary Program (TBNEP) was established in 1991 to assist the region in developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to restore and protect Tampa Bay. The Program is part of a national network of 28 estuary programs established under the Clean Water Act and administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The landmark agreement establishing the Tampa Bay NEP brought together Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee counties; the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater; the Southwest Florida Water Management District; the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; and EPA in a partnership committed to action.

In 1998, these and six other partners signed a formal Interlocal Agreement, and ancillary agreements, pledging to achieve the goals of the newly completed Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for Tampa Bay, called *Charting the Course*. The Plan culminated nearly six years of scientific research into the bay's most pressing problems, and reflected broad-based input from citizens, groups and communities with a common interest in a healthy bay as the cornerstone of a prosperous economy.

Upon adoption of the Interlocal Agreement, the Tampa Bay National Estuary Program became simply the **Tampa Bay Estuary Program**, in recognition of its reorganization as a truly regional alliance.

TBEP continues to coordinate the overall protection and restoration of the bay with assistance and support from its many formal and informal partners. TBEP monitors progress in achieving the goals of the CCMP by regularly summarizing and evaluating information provided by program participants. Under the terms of the Interlocal Agreement governing the Program, TBEP is required to review and update the major goals for bay restoration every five years to assess progress, revise strategies as needed and address emerging issues affecting the bay.

TBEP leverages the resources of program partners by financing cutting-edge research into key problems impacting the bay; sponsoring demonstration projects to test innovative solutions to these problems; providing "Mini-Grants" to community groups to engage the public in bay restoration; and developing educational programs targeting key segments of the bay community – including teachers, boaters and homeowners.

# **ABOUT CHARTING THE COURSE**



This document represents the first revision of *Charting the Course*, the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Tampa Bay, encompassing the years 2003-2008.

The original *Charting the Course*, formally adopted in 1997, set forth specific, measurable goals for bay improvement in five areas: Water & Sediment Quality, Bay Habitats, Fish & Wildlife, Dredging & Dredged Material Management, and Spill Prevention & Response. A sixth Action Plan highlighted Public Involvement and Education strategies to foster a bay stewardship ethic among the region's residents.

Within these action plans were 41 individual actions which identified a range of strategies that allow local communities to maximize return on their investment in bay restoration and protection.

In this first update, two Action Plan areas have been added to the initial list: Invasive Species and Public Access. These additions reflect new or emerging issues for the bay management community. Several individual actions in the original Plan have been merged, modified or eliminated as well, while new actions have been added based on revised information and newly identified priorities. New actions are underlined in the Index of Actions at the beginning of *Charting the Course*; merged, modified or retired actions also are noted in the Index. This update encompasses 38 actions – eight of them appearing in the Plan for the first time.

Following are descriptions of the document's major components.

#### STATE OF THE BAY

This chapter summarizes progress made in bay protection and restoration since the adoption of the original management plan, noting ongoing or new challenges. Important trends in the key issue areas identified by TBEP and its partners are presented here.

#### **GOALS & PRIORITIES**

Goals and priorities for Tampa Bay are summarized in a chart immediately preceding bay action plans. These specific and attainable targets are the foundation for strategies and themes advanced in *Charting the Course*. They relay overall priorities for bay restoration and protection, to better evaluate the benefits of measures to protect this vital environmental and economic resource.

#### **ACTION PLANS FOR BAY IMPROVEMENT**

Charting the Course presents a comprehensive slate of approved actions to assist community partners in selecting cost-effective and environmentally beneficial improvements in the eight key areas identified above. Action plans for Tampa Bay



identify a range of strategies that allow local communities to maximize return on their investment in bay recovery and protection. Many actions also achieve multiple environmental objectives, such as pollution prevention and water conservation.

Each action contains a background section summarizing the issue; the current status of the action; and the "next steps" necessary to implement the action, identifying a projected schedule for completion as well as responsible parties.

References in action plans to local governments under the heading "Responsible parties" refer to Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee counties and the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, unless otherwise noted, although all local communities in the region are urged to participate.

New actions are underlined in the Index of Action Plans at the beginning of this document. Old actions with a line through them (strikethrough) have been retired or incorporated into other actions as noted in the Index.

#### IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

TBEP partners signed a formal Interlocal Agreement in 1997 pledging to achieve the goals of the bay management plan and committing to specific actions and timetables. The Implementation & Financing chapter describes the agreement and TBEP's role in overseeing implementation, as well as mechanisms for financing bay restoration and protection strategies.

#### MONITORING BAY IMPROVEMENT

Long-term monitoring of Tampa Bay's health is central to the success of bay restoration efforts, enabling communities to measure return on investment and helping bay managers redirect their efforts when necessary. The bay monitoring program devised by TBEP in cooperation with local governments and agencies is presented in the Research and Monitoring chapter, along with key research priorities that have been revised to reflect new issues and associated gaps in scientific knowledge.

# PARTNERS OF THE TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM



HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

MANATEE COUNTY

PINELLAS COUNTY

CITY OF CLEARWATER

CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG

CITY OF TAMPA

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

TAMPA BAY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

TAMPA PORT AUTHORITY

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



# **Members of the Tampa Bay Management Conference**

The work of the Tampa Bay National Estuary Program is guided by a Tampa Bay Management Conference, which was convened at the program's outset to provide direction and input into bay problems and solutions from diverse community sectors. The Conference is comprised of key policy leaders representing local, state and federal government; members of the region's scientific and technical communities; business, agricultural and special interest groups; and citizens from throughout the region. Conference participants are recognized here for their considerable contributions in charting the course for Tampa Bay.

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Deborah Getzoff	Deborah Getzoff	Commission of Hillsborough
Florida Department of	Florida Department of	County
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Chan	Citali	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Tom Welborn	Tom Welborn	C.S. 741111y Corps of Engineers
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	Florida Fish and Wildlife	Conservation Commission
Pinellas County	Conservation Commission	Craig Kovach
77 M D'II I	Conservation Commission	Co-Chair
Vice Mayor Bill Jonson	Rob Brown	Nitrogen Management
City of Clearwater	Co-Chair	Consortium
T T		Consortium
Janet Kovach	Technical Advisory Committee	D 1 1 14 ( 16
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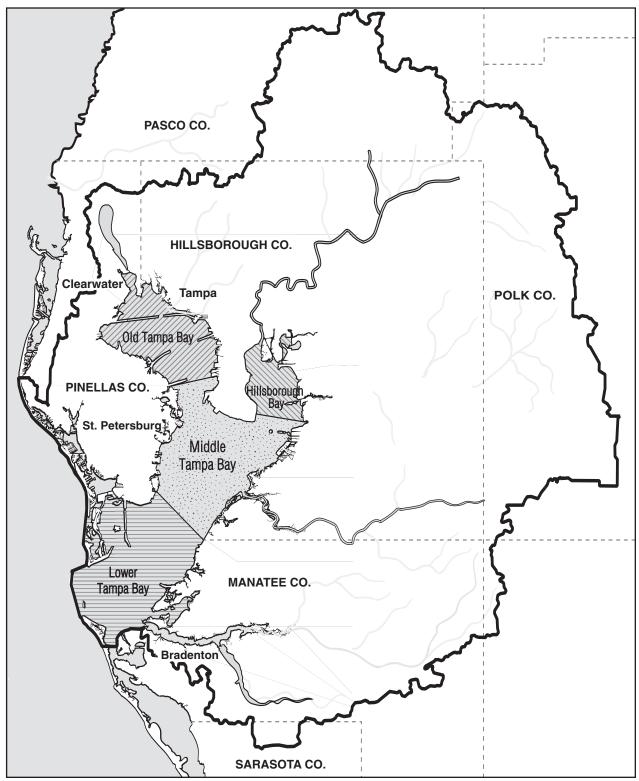
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## **Tampa Bay Watershed Boundaries and Major Bay Segments**



More than two million people reside in the 2,200-square-mile Tampa Bay watershed, which reaches into Sarasota, Pasco and Polk counties. Tampa Bay is Florida's largest open-water estuary, covering almost 400 square miles.