



Seagrass Protection Ordinance

Overview

- **Intensive horseback riding within the Pinellas County Aquatic Preserve (PCAP) has led to significant seagrass damage and water quality violations.**
- **Activities and subsequent outcomes are inconsistent with County water quality ordinances, the County's NPDES permit, the Comprehensive and Strategic Plans, TBEP management plans, and State Best Management Practices for Equine Activities.**
- **Proposed ordinance prohibits horseback riding within the PCAP and other activities that significantly harm seagrass resources.**

Water Quality and Public Health



Site Description	Collection Date	Test Result (Enterococci)
State Standard		70
Horses in water	6/3/2019	57
No horses	6/5/2019	10 U
Horses in water	6/5/2019	96
No horses	6/6/2019	10 U
Horses in water	6/6/2019	74
No horses	6/10/2019	328
Horses in water	6/10/2019	2282
No horses	6/11/2019	10 U
Horses in water	6/11/2019	529
Horses in water	6/11/2019	185

U: at the limit of detection

Florida Department of Health:

If Enterococci are present in high concentrations in recreational waters and are ingested while swimming or enter the skin through a cut or sore, they may cause human disease, infections or rashes.

Best Practices and Legal Requirements

State Best Management Practices for Equine Activities:

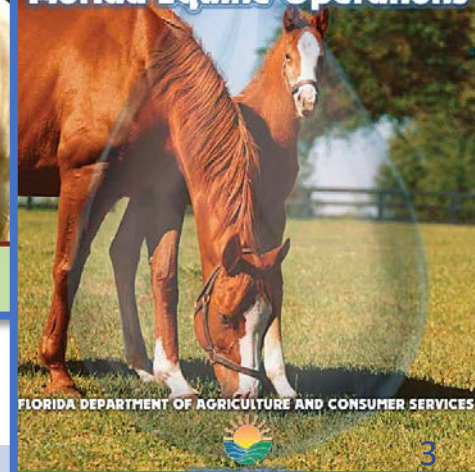
- Manure and urine can create water quality and health hazards
- Riding should occur a minimum of **25 feet from waterbodies**
- Keep horses out of natural waters to avoid bank erosion and water pollution

Small Scale Horse Operations:
Best Management Practices for
Water Resource Protection in Florida



Florida Department of Environmental Protection
October 2013

Water Quality/Quantity
Best Management Practices
for
Florida Equine Operations



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES



Best Practices and Legal Requirements

Chapter 18-20 Florida Aquatic Preserves

- Aquatic preserves were established for the purpose of being preserved in an essentially natural or existing condition...
- To protect and enhance the waters of the preserves so the public may continue to enjoy the traditional recreational uses of those waters such as swimming, boating, and fishing.
- Discourage activities which degrade the aesthetic, biological, or scientific values, or the quality, or utility of a preserve



Pre-extensive Riding



Google Earth

Extensive Riding



Google Earth

Pre-extensive Riding



Extensive Riding



Pre-extensive Riding



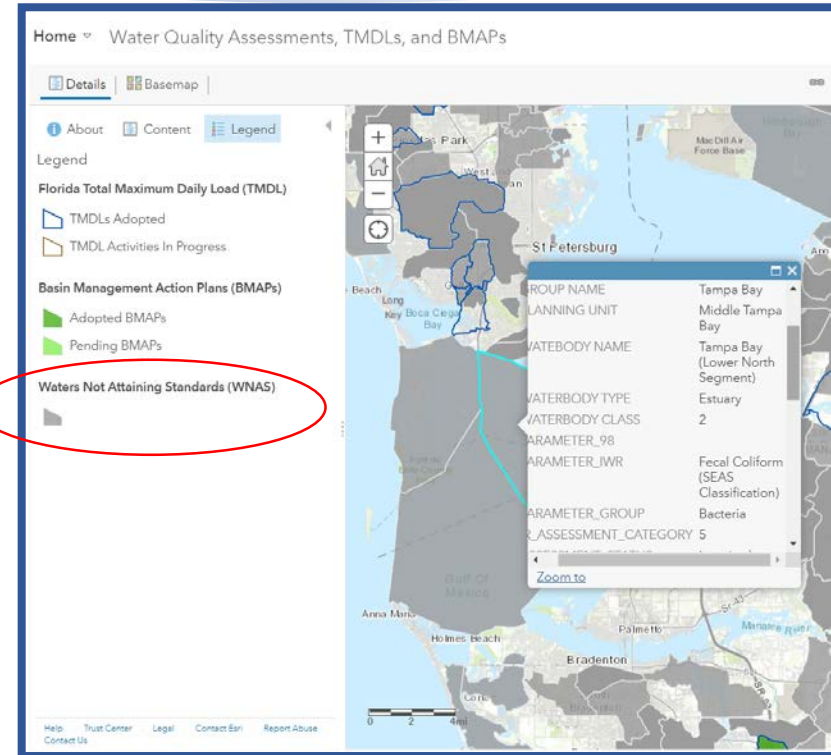
Extensive Riding



Best Practices and Legal Requirements

NPDES Permit requirements:

- Control the discharge of spills and the illegal dumping or improper disposal of materials other than stormwater such as industrial and commercial wastes, trash, used motor vehicle fluids, leaf litter, grass clippings, **animal wastes**, etc.
- Area impaired for bacteria.
- NPDES permit requires the implementation of Bacteria Pollution Control Plans to restore water quality.



Ch. 58 County Code, Stormwater and Surface Water Pollution:

- Any discharge to the separate storm sewer system or to any receiving waters of the county that is not composed entirely of storm water is prohibited.
- Any discharge that is in violation of federal, State, county, municipal, or other laws, rules, regulations, orders or permits, or which causes or contributes to a violation of State water quality standards contained in Chapter 62, Florida Administrative Code, in the waters of the United States, is prohibited.

- **Comprehensive Plan:**
 - Preserve, protect, and conserve water quality and aquatic habitats including seagrasses
 - Show measurable improvements in the quality of County waters as a result of management activities
- **TBEP**
 - Seagrasses are a keystone species and a priority habitat for restoration and protection
 - Controlling nitrogen inputs to the bay is one of the Estuary Program's most prominent initiatives and impacts the environment and our economy
 - CCMP calls for managing recreational uses of the bay by eliminating sources of bacteria that are harmful to human and environmental health

Example Jurisdictions Across the State

Jurisdiction	Horses prohibited on Beach	All Animals Prohibited on Beach	Horseback Riding Permissions
Atlantic Beach	X		
Bay County		X	
Boca Raton		X	
Bradenton			Horses riding at Palma Sola, FDOT asserted jurisdiction
Bradenton Beach		X	
Broward County			Designated trails only, no beach trails
Collier County		X	
Citrus County		X	
Daytona Beach		X	
Daytona Beach Shores	X		
Deerfield Beach	X		
Escambia County		X	
Fernandina Beach			Horses prohibited in water, designed beach for riding above MHW, seasonal restrictions
Flagler County			Designated trails only, no beach trails
Flagler Beach	X	X	
Gulf County			Horses prohibited in the water, designated beach area that includes a marked buffer line
Hernando County		X	
Key West		X	
Lee County	X		Horseback riding allowed within designed preserves, no beaches.
Manatee County			Designated trails only, no beach trails
Miami-Dade County	X		
Santa Rosa County		X	
Sarasota County	X		
St. Augustine Beach	X		
Volusia County		X	
Walton County	X		

Horseback Riding in the Tampa Bay Area



- **Pinellas County:**

- Brooker Creek Preserve (9.1 miles)
- Walsingham Equestrian Park (70 acres)
- Pinellas Park Equestrian Trail System (10 trail miles + event facilities)
- City of Clearwater (27 acres)

- **Regional Opportunities**

- SWFWMD has 34 properties and 468 miles of equestrian trails
- Hillsborough County has 100 miles of trails
- Manatee County has ~65 miles of trails
- Pasco County has 145 miles of trails



Canyon Horseback Riding Trails



SWFWMD

Ongoing and Next Steps

- **Stakeholders updated of public hearing**
 - Email
 - Posting at Skyway Causeway
- **If Ordinance is approved**
 - FDEP will update the Aquatic Preserve Management Plan
 - Stakeholders will be updated of implementation
 - County environmental staff will have a presence during the initial weeks of implementation
 - FDOT will install signage
 - Coordination with law enforcement agencies on enforcement