

SMARTT MODEL - TAMPA BAY WATER

The following is a synopsis of a 2 hour meeting with Tampa Bay Water Staff. Here are the facts of the SMARTT model as explained by Warren Hogg & Michelle Biddle:

1. This is ONLY a budgetary tool to determine the annual rate of water. Discussion: We knew this. However, the fear has been that it would be used to determine what water sources are used each year and from a pure economic standpoint - groundwater is always the cheapest. For next year's projection they are averaging the last 5 years of surface water usage of 20-30 mgd (Hillsborough River/By-Pass Canal and Alafia River) and 105 mgd for groundwater pumping. This is determining the rate of the water for the year.
2. There is an Organizational Operational (OR/OP) model that TBW has been using since its inception to determine the alternative water sources each year and reduction of groundwater pumping. THIS WILL STILL BE THE DETERMINING FACTOR. Discussion: If this is true, I don't think that there may be as big a problem with this SMARTT model as originally thought. The OR/OP has allowed the 11 wellfields to get down to 72 mgd in the last year. For the past year or so TBW has been able to keep the pumping between 90-72 mgd. (They are allowed up to 121 mgd until 2008 pursuant to their permit.) Southwest Florida Water Management District watches this very carefully since it is tied directly to the Partnership Agreement and their permit.
3. The reservoir in south Hillsborough has been filling up and has approximately 1.8 billion gallons of water in it already. The max it will hold is 15 billion gallons. NOT ONE DROP OF GROUNDWATER HAS BEEN USED TO FILL THIS RESERVOIR. Discussion: During the EPC meeting one of the biggest fears was that the 105 mgd minimum determined through the SMARTT model was going to be used for next year's budget projection because of trying to fill the reservoir in one year. Only surface water from Hillsborough River/By-Pass Canal and Alafia River have been used for filling it so far. And TBW has NO intention of using groundwater in the future. (Both Warren and Michelle appeared shocked that groundwater would even be considered to fill the reservoir. That would require double pumping.) Then, of course, we have had an abundance of rain, so Mother Nature has been helping quite a bit.
4. They would like to fill the reservoir in one year, but technically have until December 2007 to fill it. So, there is no immediate need to have it filled. Discussion: I asked at what level does the reservoir have to be to start using it as an alternative water supply before we touch groundwater. Neither could answer this question, but were going to find out. Warren did say that there is a minimum level it has to be for them to use it since the lines are gravity fed out of the reservoir. So, there is another source that they have NOT taken into consideration for next year's water sources.

Conclusion, if TBW is only looking at 1 year increments for the budget, they can use more realistic numbers in calculating what water sources will be available. Both TBW staff admitted that last year they were able to use 45 mgd from surface water and less than 90 mgd to meet their needs. Realistically, there is no reason to calculate averages since it would take almost a year to see a major reduction in surface water availability even if we didn't have rain for 6 months. By then, they would be in their next budget cycle and could correct it.

Contact the board members of Southwest Florida Water Management District and voice your concerns raising the minimum groundwater pumping to 105 mgd.

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