



## **Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal Reclassification – Q&A**

### ***Background***

More than 2.4 million people in the Tampa Bay region are served by Tampa Bay Water's drinking water system. The Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal water sources have been critical components of the regional system since 2002. The use of surface water has enabled wellfield pumping to be reduced, water levels to rise and environmental recovery to begin. Currently the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal are classified by the state of Florida for protection of fish and wildlife, and recreational uses (Class III), but not for protection of drinking water (Class I).

### ***Q: What is Tampa Bay Water seeking to do?***

**A:** A Class I designation would align the state classification for the river with its current use as a drinking water source, and is consistent with other state and local programs and initiatives. Tampa Bay Water is in the process of preparing a petition to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to change classifications for the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal from Class III to Class I – the petition process requires thoroughly evaluating the scientific, economic and public health effects of reclassification.

### ***Q: What would reclassification do?***

**A:** A Class I designation would help maintain the current water quality and protect these drinking water sources from potential future contamination due to changes in pollutant discharges or land use activities. The reclassification would apply only to portions of the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal upstream of the drinking water intake on both water bodies.

### ***Q: Why is it necessary to reclassify the Alafia River?***

**A:** The reclassification will protect the drinking water sources from pollution and will ensure safe and reliable drinking water for the region. The Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal are two of only five drinking water sources in Florida that do not have a Class I designation.

### ***Q: Does this mean Tampa Bay Water will take more water from the Alafia River?***

**A:** No. The reclassification of these water bodies is not related to the permits Tampa Bay Water has to withdraw from the Alafia River or Tampa Bypass Canal.

### ***Q: What is the reclassification process?***

**A:** Tampa Bay Water would submit a draft petition to the FDEP requesting that these water bodies be upgraded to Class I designation. After review, FDEP would initiate a public rule-making process, and ultimately make a recommendation to the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission. If approved, the new designation would add criteria to protect the region's drinking water quality and reduce the risk of contamination.

***Q: What analyses are being conducted?***

**A:** Tampa Bay Water is conducting an extensive scientific review and evaluation of water quality, potential pollution sources, future land use and potential economic impacts of reclassification on the water bodies and surrounding lands.

***Q: What are the benefits of upgrading the Alafia River from Class III designation to Class I?***

**A:** Upgrading the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal to Class I designation will protect the region's drinking water sources and minimize the risk associated with future pollutant discharges and land use changes. Protecting water quality now protects the public's substantial investment in alternative sources, ensures adequate and affordable drinking water for the region, protects the river ecosystems and reduces pollution to Tampa Bay.

***Q: Will reclassification affect recreational use on the river?***

**A:** No. The reclassification will not require additional restrictions on recreational docks, boating or fishing. In fact, the Hillsborough River is a good example of a drinking water source with a Class I designation that has plenty of recreational activity.

***Q: To date, what has the technical analysis shown?***

**A:** The analysis has shown that with a few minor exceptions, the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal currently meet the Class I criteria and no remediation will be needed to attain these standards. The reclassification would not have a significant impact on existing land uses or recreational activities, but is necessary to ensure that water quality is maintained in the future.

***For More Information***

For more information on the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal Water Quality Reclassification/Upgrade Petitions project, contact:

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