

**What is the purpose of this project?**

The Tampa Bay region continues to grow, and as it grows, so does the need for additional drinking water. The South Hillsborough Wellfield project is one of three top-ranked projects under further evaluation to meet the region's drinking water needs in the 2028 timeframe. This project is investigating the feasibility of a 7.5-million gallon per day wellfield in the Balm area.

**How is it possible to develop a new wellfield in the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA)?**

Southern Hillsborough County is within a designated Water Use Caution Area by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District). To address both growing water needs in this area and saltwater intrusion in the aquifer along the coastline, the District has adopted a "net benefit" framework. In this area, any new withdrawal from the aquifer must be offset by another source and result in an additional positive effect within the same aquifer.

Using this approach, a new wellfield could be developed in southern Hillsborough County by acquiring aquifer recharge credits from Hillsborough County via its South Hillsborough Aquifer Recharge Project (SHARP). SHARP involves pumping reclaimed water into a salty, coastal zone of the aquifer. Modeling studies show that the recharge water increases water levels in the aquifer that helps prevent further saltwater intrusion into fresh groundwater. It also increases aquifer levels several miles inland from the recharge well location. This increase in groundwater levels enables freshwater withdrawals further inland to supply the area's growing drinking water needs.

**Does this project propose using reclaimed water for drinking water?**

No. This project would withdraw fresh groundwater approximately 5 miles inland from the reclaimed water recharge wells. Reclaimed water would continue to be pumped into the salty aquifer near the coast. Because groundwater naturally flows westward to the Gulf of Mexico, no reclaimed water that is injected into a SHARP well will make its way upstream in the aquifer to a withdrawal well. Modeling confirms that the proposed wellfield withdrawals will not change this westward flow of groundwater.

**How were the well sites chosen?**

The general location for the new wellfield is based on the net benefit achieved by Hillsborough County's SHARP wells. The recharge water increases aquifer levels several miles inland, so the project team began searching for potential well sites within the area that showed the greatest net benefit. Meanwhile, Hillsborough County settled a legal dispute with a large landowner in this area and began acquiring property for a new drinking water plant and for environmental preservation. Tampa Bay Water is working closely with Hillsborough County to co-locate withdrawal wells, connecting pipelines and treatment facilities on land that is being purchased by the County.

### **How much water will be collected from the wells?**

Currently, project managers anticipate withdrawing up to 7.5 million gallons per day, but this number is subject to change based on the results of an upcoming aquifer performance test. The final withdrawal quantity will be determined by the Southwest Florida Water Management District during the permitting process if this project is selected.

### **How deep will the wells be?**

The wells will be around 950 feet deep to maximize well productivity and avoid impacts to the local environment.

### **Will this wellfield take water from local farmers or private wells?**

Our initial evaluations show that water withdrawals from the proposed wellfield should pose no problems for existing wells in the area. The average water level changes due to the proposed wellfield are anticipated to be only about 2 feet; water levels in the Balm area normally fluctuate between 10-20 feet during the year. Given the small scale of the wellfield and small anticipated water level changes, Tampa Bay Water expects that groundwater can be withdrawn from the area safely without harming existing legal users. If the wellfield is developed, Tampa Bay Water will investigate any well complaints and mitigate any that are caused by the South Hillsborough Wellfield.

### **Will the South Hillsborough Wellfield project cause sinkholes?**

Sinkholes are naturally occurring features throughout much of Florida, including Hillsborough County. Southern Hillsborough County is less prone to sinkholes due to the geology of the area, but they can still occur. If this project is selected for development, Tampa Bay Water will conduct an evaluation and risk assessment based on existing sinkhole records.

### **Will this project impact flows in the Alafia River?**

No. The Alafia River is not close to the proposed withdrawal wells. Additionally, the Alafia River is not connected to the Floridan Aquifer in the Riverview area and pumping from the proposed wellfield would have no effect on river flow.

### **Will this project impact nearby springs?**

Tampa Bay Water is committed to environmentally sustainable water supply projects and will design the project to protect nearby springs. Our feasibility study includes an assessment of surface water features, including Boyette Springs, Buckhorn Springs, Green Sink and Lithia Springs. If the proposed project has a negative impact on these features, it would not be permitted by the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

### **Will this project induce movement of contaminants in the aquifer?**

There are no known contamination sites on the properties where the production wells may be constructed. However, Tampa Bay Water would complete a full assessment of potential contamination sites in the area prior to seeking a water use permit. This information and assessment would be required by the District during the Water Use Permit application process for the potential South Hillsborough Wellfield.

**What will the wellhouses look like?**

The well head, electronics and pumping equipment will be contained in small, garage-style buildings, typically built of split-face concrete block. These well houses are inconspicuous and blend in with surrounding facilities.