

# Peace River Manasota

Regional Water Supply Authority

## Dona Bay System Feasibility Study



### Mission Statement

To provide the region with a sufficient, high-quality, safe drinking water supply that is reliable, sustainable and protective of our natural resources now and into the future.

## Background

The Dona Bay System, located in Sarasota County, is identified by the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (Authority) as a potential new source of up to 20 million gallons per day in water supply for the region.

The Dona Bay watershed historically included about 16 square miles in western Sarasota County. In the late 1960s, the Cow Pen Canal was constructed, redirecting flow from about 58 square miles of the Myakka River watershed to Dona Bay. As a result, freshwater volumes to the Dona Bay estuary were dramatically increased, stressing the natural flora and fauna of that system. The capture, storage and use of excess freshwater before it enters the Dona Bay system offers an opportunity to improve environmental conditions and provide for an alternative water supply that can serve the needs of the public.

In 2002 Sarasota County began a comprehensive study of the Cow Pen Slough and Dona Bay system. The study included the collection of data on the biology of the system, freshwater inflows, water quality and rainfall. Several large properties situated within the watershed, including the 548-acre Venice Minerals site and the 1000-acre Albritton site, were acquired by the County in large part for potential use as future reservoirs and water treatment areas.

In late 2005, Sarasota County, with funding assistance from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), commissioned the development of a watershed management plan to address multiple objectives. These include restoration of a more natural freshwater inflow regime to Dona Bay, flood protection, protection of water quality, and identification of water supply development opportunities consistent with environmental restoration objectives.

This very comprehensive plan was completed in 2006 and lays out a program to divert and store excess freshwater using the Venice Minerals and Albritton sites. These efforts, combined with the harvest of water from storage for public supply, would reduce excess freshwater inflow to Dona Bay and improve environmental conditions. However, Sarasota County projections don't show a need for additional County water supply until after 2022. Development of Dona Bay as a regional water supply sooner than 2022 could build on the County's work, help meet the future needs of the Authority's members, which includes Sarasota County, and improve conditions in Dona Bay sooner rather than later.

In March 2007 the Authority Board approved beginning feasibility studies on three potential sources, including Dona Bay, for future regional supply. This study, scheduled for completion in the summer of 2008, would be conducted in conjunction with the SWFWMD. The feasibility studies and future development of selected alternative water supplies by the Authority will also be co-funded by the SWFWMD.

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