

Brant Lake Narrative

The following narrative is based on an interview with Chris Capkovic at his home on Lake Brant in July 1998. The interview provided information, which combined with survey, biological assessment, and other agency's data illustrates the past, present, and future trends of the lake.

Chris Capkovic



We prefer to do manual maintenance of the lake, just like one would do their yard. Trim a tree here trim a bush there. Leading through example and not force-feeding anybody this kind of stuff ...really works

The Capkovic's moved to Brant Lake in 1992 from a residence on Lake Egypt. Eventually, Chris muses, the novelty of swimming, fishing and skiing wears off and one begins to enjoy the lake for the lake, for the view and the sunsets. The lake has become Chris's hobby and he has been involved with its health and future since the inception of the Lake District. He often equates the lake to a yard; it is part of nature and needs a little management. The well being of Lake Brant is a long-term project for Chris.

Brant Lake



I think part of it is luck, on our lake while we do have a lot of homes, there are some natural areas. We do have wetlands attached. It's a great filter for water coming into our lake

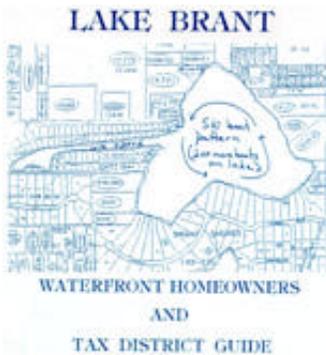
Brant Lake also known as Brandt Lake, is a 60-acre lake located in the Northwest Hillsborough Basin. The lake was named after a former resident, Mr. Brandt and some of the streets surrounding it carry the reminders of his family as Nancy, Rebecca and Lorena Streets are named after his daughters.

Brant Lake is a natural lake, augmented by a manmade canal in 1974 to increase lakefront property. The lake has a tea-color stemming from the tannins released by the cypress lining its shore

and the wetlands, which border the lake on the east.

In the early 1990's, residents of the lake witnessed an increase in the clarity of

the water. Clarity is often perceived to be a favorable characteristic by residents, but in this instance it indicated a hydrilla problem, which was robbing the lake of its nutrients. In 1993, the Hillsborough County Special Dependent District for Lake Brant was formed, mainly to address the Hydrilla problem, but ultimately to provide lake management and to share the expenses this entailed.



In 1994, we formed something called the Hillsborough County Special Dependent District on Lake Brant... so that we could manage the lake and share the expense by everyone participating vis-a-vis the real estate taxes.

The district is represented by seven officials elected by the members of the taxing district and is funded by an annually determined budget, approved by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners. The budget is developed by members of the taxing district and is raised by means of a tax imposed in addition to property tax, paid equally by all residents with lakefront property or lake access. Using the district as a vehicle, the residents have addressed many issues including: Raising awareness of beneficial actions for the lake; Assessing and addressing vegetation problems and re-vegetation of the lake after SONAR treatments for the Hydrilla problem; Enhancing lake safety; Financing a pump to keep the wetlands charged.

The lake is home to a wide variety of wildlife species. The water is populated with perch, bass, gar, mudfish and an occasional alligator. In the past, Lake Brant had a reputation for a large alligator population and was known not as a swimming lake, but as a good location for hunting alligators. The combination of the wetlands, little overhead air traffic and the lake itself make it a haven for birds, including eagles which can be seen in the dead cypress rimming the lake. The lake has a growing duck population, in part influenced by the association's efforts through provision of duck houses.

Development



We realize that the lake is an evolution, that we have some constraints possibly because of the canal and the extra 40

Eighty-four homes are spread along the lakeshore of Brant Lake, approximately forty of those on the canal that was dug in 1974, doubling the amount of septic, pollution, boats and fertilizers that can potentially threaten the lake.

The earliest development began in the 1940's but until the 1970's there were only nine homes on the lake. Throughout the 1970's and 80's, large parcels of property were divided into lots and the

homes. building of more opulent homes began creating an "us against them" attitude between the older and newer residents. The majority of the property around the lake is zoned at 1/2 acre minimum, perhaps a legacy of the Lutz area's wish to remain rural and to maintain a sense of community. In the recent past, development on the lake has slowed and there is little reason to think it will re-escalate, as the remaining undeveloped land is comprised of wetlands or is owned by individuals interested in maintaining the natural state of their property.

Historically, the land surrounding the lake was mainly used for agriculture, which is perhaps better for the health of the lake. Other uses have left their mark as well. When highway 41 was being built, the mules employed in the work were housed at one end of Brant Lake, making the water around the Capcovic's home suspiciously murkier than the norm.

The Future

"The lake is an evolution is an idea articulated by Chris that has served Brant Lake well. The Special Dependency District has become a model for other citizen organizations and has gained the support of the county. In addition, the district participated in the Florida Lakes and Neighborhoods Program in 1995 and 1996 that supplied the district with grant money and helpful information to be disseminated to all of the lake's residents. The district has been effective, striving for a proactive attitude rather than simply reacting when a crisis faces the health of the lake, the value of property and the environment enjoyed by all the residents. The lake needs supervision, and unfortunately a common line of thought is, "Everybody thinks someone else is watching," when in fact no one is. The residents of Brant Lake are watching, and the future health of the lake seems well in hand.