

Florida Department of
Environmental Protection

Memorandum

December 2003

TO: File

FROM: Chris Becker, Myakka Wild and Scenic River Biologist
District 4 Administration

SUBJECT: Myakka Wild and Scenic River Inspection



The river inspection for the month of December took place on the 17th, 18th, and 19th. The upper river, from State Road 72 to Snook Haven, was inspected by Poke Boat, on the 18th, by Chris Becker. The inspection began at 7:45 a.m. The weather was clear, cold, with a north wind associated with a cold front, with a high temperature near 60^oF.

Water levels had risen in the river because of nearly five inches of rainfall during the week prior to this inspection, enough so that portages were not required. Water was spilling approximately two-feet over Downs' Dam. The staff gauge downstream from the dam was at 2.30 feet, which is up 0.64 feet from the 1.66-foot reading recorded for November.

Wildlife, fish, and vegetation observations of interest on the upper river inspection include:

- Sixty American white pelicans were observed in the shallows south of Deep Hole
- An American bittern was observed "standing still" in the marsh north of the Lower Myakka Lake.
- Eleven bald eagles were observed either perched in trees along the river, or soaring on the section between Deep Hole and Downs' Dam. All, but one, were juveniles.
- A large alligator (9-10 feet) was observed basking near Snook Haven with an arrow sticking out of its right side. The alligator appeared to swim and dive, without difficulty. Tom Moralee, Venice Campground, reported the injured alligator to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, during the Thanksgiving Holiday week. Numerous canoeist/boaters had observed the alligator while on the river and they reported it to him.
- Southern leopard frogs were heard calling from marshes along the river.
- String-lilies, arrowheads, climbing hempvines, and climbing asters were in flower.

No recreational use was observed on the upper river.

Turbid water was observed flowing from the Venetian Golf and River Club development into the river. The water was discharging from wooded slough system that usually does not flow directly to the river (water was cascading over the river's bank). The discharge was approximately a half-mile upstream of the power lines (near where Laurel Road ends). The water upstream of the discharge was clear tannic water (black coffee). The water at the point of discharge was turbid (coffee with cream), and remained turbid to at least the power line crossing. A complaint was called in to Pam Fetterman, SWFWMD, about this discharge which potentially was an Outstanding Florida Water Rule and Myakka Wild and Scenic River Rule Violation. Attached is

an E-mail from Steven Ellis, SWFWMD, which details the cause of the discharge (blown-out lake bank) and compliance investigation.

The inspection ended at 3:30 p.m.

The lower river, from Snook Haven to the Sarasota/Charlotte County line, was inspected on two days, the 17th and 19th, because of poor weather conditions. The inspection on the 17th was done by Chris Becker, and FPS Volunteer, Jim Walter, in the Boston Whaler. The inspection began at 8:50 a.m. The weather was cloudy, rainy, and very windy, with a high temperature near 55^oF.

The tide was high during the inspection, with an outgoing tide during the return trip north.

Wildlife observations of interest on the lower river inspection include:

- Downstream (south) of the US-41 Bridge a raft of 68 lesser scaup were observed. The whole flock flew as our boat approached.
- Flocks of American robins were observed flying over the river.
- Five Florida manatees were observed between Ramblers Rest and the river's confluence with Warm Mineral Springs Creek (Salt Creek).
- A dead six-foot alligator was observed floating near the shore a half-mile downstream of Rambler's Rest. On close inspection, no sign of injury was observed, to indicate the cause of death.

Extensive wetland vegetation clearing and filling was observed at the Baker property (see attached photos) in Myakka River Trails. This violation of the Wild and Scenic River Rule, and Sarasota County Myakka River Protection Zone - native vegetation buffer requirements, was reported to Howard Berna, Sarasota County, Resource Protection Services, Officer Shirley, Florida Park Patrol, and Johanna Miller, DEP Southwest District Office. [Officer Shirley and I visited the site on 12/22 to document this violation]

Because of high waves the inspection ended at Myakkahatchee Creek. The inspection ended at 1:55 p.m.

The last segment, Myakkahatchee Creek to the Sarasota/Charlotte County line, was done by Chris Becker and Park Ranger Mike Egan, on the 19th in the Boston Whaler. The inspection began at 8:20 a.m. The weather was clear and very windy, with a high temperature near 50^oF.

The tide was low, so that numerous sandbars were exposed.

Wildlife observations of interest on the river inspection from Myakkahatchee Creek south include:

- Three hooded mergansers (one male and two females) were observed near the county line.
- On the exposed sandbars least sandpipers, dowitcher sp., laughing gulls, ring-billed gulls, killdeer, double-crested cormorants, boat-tailed grackles, mottled ducks, and black-bellied plovers were observed.
- An adult bald eagle pair was observed soaring near Tarpon Point.

No boats were observed on the lower river. Ninety-six crab traps were observed south of the US-41 Bridge.

The inspection ended at 10:00 a.m.

Activities observed along the river during this inspection:

River Blockages: Several trees have fallen across the river downstream of Downs' Dam; these could be passed with a canoe but would be a barrier to larger boats.

River Use:

Park Pavilion to Lower Lake: None

Lower Lake to Deep Hole: None

Deep Hole to Down's Dam: None

Downs' Dam to Snook Haven: None

Snook Haven to Rambler's Rest: None

Rambler's Rest to U.S. 41: None

- 30 crab traps

U.S. 41 to Mangrove Island Rookery: None

- 30 crab traps

Mangrove Island Rookery to Charlotte County line: None

- 36 crab traps

Vegetation Observations:

In Flower

Crinum americanum – string-lily

Eichhornia cassipies – water hyacinth

Mikania scandens – climbing hempvine

Polygonum spp. – smartweed

Sagittaria spp. - arrowhead

Symphotrichum carolinianum – climbing aster

In Fruit/Seed

Baccharis sp. - saltbush

Sabal palmetto – cabbage palm

Schinus terebinthifolius – Brazilian pepper

Toxicodendron radicans – eastern poison ivy

MYAKKA WILD AND SCENIC RIVER
Monthly Wildlife Survey

Date: 12/18/03
Passengers: Chris Becker

Date: 12/17/03 & 12/19/2003
Passengers: Chris Becker & Jim Walter (volunteer)

Species Name	Pavillion to Lower Lake	to Deep Hole	Deep Hole to Dam	Dam to Snook	Snook to Ram Rest	Ram. Rest to U.S.41	U.S. 41 to Rookery	Rookery to Co. Line	Totals
American alligator (<4')	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	0	9
American alligator (4-6')	3	5	10	0	0	0	0	0	18
American alligator (6-8')	6	14	41	4	0	0	0	0	65
American alligator >8'	0	4	8	1	0	0	0	0	13
Peninsula cooter	0	0	2	67	0	0	0	0	69
American crow	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	8
American kestrel	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
American robin	12	0	5	0	350	0	0	0	367
American white pelican	0	60	0	1	0	0	0	0	61
Anhinga	13	2	47	8	2	0	0	0	72
Bald eagle	2	4	11	1	0	0	0	2	20
Barred owl	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Belted kingfisher	4	3	9	13	2	0	0	1	32
American bittern	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Black-bellied plover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
Black-necked stilt	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Blue-gray gnatcatcher	2	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	9
Blue-winged teal	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Carolina wren	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Common yellowthroat	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
crow spp.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
Double-crested cormorant	16	39	4	1	1	0	1	4	66
dowitcher spp.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Long-billed dowitcher	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Eastern brown pelican	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cattle egret	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Great egret	8	13	6	5	4	0	0	3	39
Snowy egret	2	12	3	7	1	0	0	0	25
Boat-tailed grackle	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	18	24
Common grackle	0	24	0	1	0	0	0	0	25
Black-crowned night heron	14	0	48	2	1	0	0	0	65
Great blue heron	4	11	3	5	1	2	0	0	26
Green heron	6	0	7	5	0	0	0	0	18
Little blue heron	6	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	10
Tricolored heron	4	9	3	3	1	0	2	1	23
Yellow-crowned night heron	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hooded merganser	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	6
Glossy ibis	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
White ibis	4	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	10
Killdeer	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	24	29
Laughing gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	42
Least sandpiper	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	142	145

Species Name	Pavillion to Lower Lake	to Deep Hole	Deep Hole to Dam	Dam to Snook	Snook to Ram Rest	Ram. Rest to U.S.41	U.S. 41 to Rookery	Rookery to Co. Line	Totals
Lesser scaup	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	3	71
Lesser yellowlegs	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Limpkin	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Loggerhead shrike	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mottled duck	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	5	13
Northern cardinal	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Northern mockingbird	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Osprey	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
Pied-billed grebe	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Red-shouldered hawk	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	6
Red-winged blackbird	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
Ring-billed gull	0	5	0	0	0	0	8	12	25
Roseate spoonbill	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Sandhill crane	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Swamp sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tree swallow	23	1000	0	0	0	0	0	58	1081
Caspian tern	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Forster's tern	3	25	0	0	0	0	0	27	55
Black vulture	35	143	19	29	0	24	0	0	250
Turkey vulture	102	11	7	5	0	0	1	4	130
Palm warbler	17	3	9	26	0	0	0	0	55
Yellow-rumped warbler	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Wood stork	1	6	7	0	5	0	0	0	19
Pileated woodpecker	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	6
Red-bellied woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Florida manatee	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5
White-tailed deer	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total All Species	329	1469	278	198	372	28	85	380	3139
Species	41	38	30	25	13	4	8	20	

Becker, Chris

From: Steven.Ellis@swfwmd.state.fl.us
Sent: Monday, December 22, 2003 10:24 AM
To: Becker, Chris
Cc: Pam.Fetterman@swfwmd.state.fl.us; Kathleen.Kastner@SWFWMD.STATE.FL.US; Cheryl.Johnson@swfwmd.state.fl.us
Subject: Re: Turbid Discharge into the Myakka River from Venetian Golf and River Club Development

Chris,

At 3:00 PM on Thursday, December 18, 2003, I made a site inspection to the referenced project as a follow up to your concern. I observed de-watering of a lake (Lake # 2) within this project, however, the flow-path of this water was directed into several internal wet detention pond and wetland areas prior to discharge into a vegetated swale and then sheet flowing through the wetlands adjacent to the River. The surface water, which I believe is a combination of de-watering and natural surface water run-off from this site, was clear as it entered the wetlands adjacent to the River. After sheet flowing through the wetlands next to the River, this run-off becomes naturally channelized and discharges into the river with tremendous energy due to the steep elevation drop over a short distance. It is from this high energy impact that the water becomes turbid. I do not believe that any sediment from construction activities on-site is leaving this site.

District staff contacted the engineering firm of record for this project the next morning to make them aware of the complaint received and to request a review of the current de-watering practices. This completes our compliance investigation.

Steve

Steven Ellis
Field Services Technician
Sarasota Regulation
Southwest Florida Water Management District
(941) 377-3722
mailto:Steven.Ellis@swfwmd.state.fl.us
<http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us>

Pam Fetterman
Sent by: Pam To: Cheryl Johnson/SAR_REG/swfwmd@swfwmd, Steven
Ellis/SAR_REG/swfwmd@swfwmd,
Fetterman Kathleen Kastner/SAR_REG/swfwmd@swfwmd
cc:
Subject: Turbid Discharge into the Myakka River from Venetian Golf and River Club
Development
12/18/2003 05:50
PM

Cheryl/Steve/Kathleen:

FYI. I contacted BRA on Thursday, 12/18 about 10 minutes after I received the phone call, at approximately 1:50pm. I informed Cheryl, then contacted BRA and spoke with Carrie, whom said they would get right on it. Laura Oadley called back at about 17:20 and confirmed that WCI had rectified the problem, which, according to Laura, was a blown-out lake bank. She did not have any further details. If I can provide you all with any additional information, please let me know.

pam

----- Forwarded by Pam Fetterman/SAR_REG/swfwmd on 12/18/2003 05:43 PM -----

"Becker, Chris"

<Chris.Becker@dep.state.fl.us> To: <pam.fetterman@swfwmd.state.fl.us>
cc: "Hand, Todd" <Todd.Hand@dep.state.fl.us>, "Shirley, Rachel"
<Rachel.Shirley@dep.state.fl.us>

12/18/2003 05:36 PM Subject: Turbid Discharge into the Myakka River from Venetian Golf and River

Club

Development

Pam,

The turbid water is entering the Myakka from what appeared to be a hardwood swamp in the Southwest Quarter of Section 25; T38S; R19E. The aerial I looked at shows an east to west running ditch at the north end of the above referenced quarter section. South of that ditch on the Myakka River there is a tributary (canal) that enters the river from an almost northeast angle (on the aerial and topographic maps the tributary/canal shows up almost being the same width as the river at their confluence (its the first tributary entering the river south of the north quarter section line). The discharge was entering the river approximately halfway between the northern SW quarter section line and the tributary to its south.

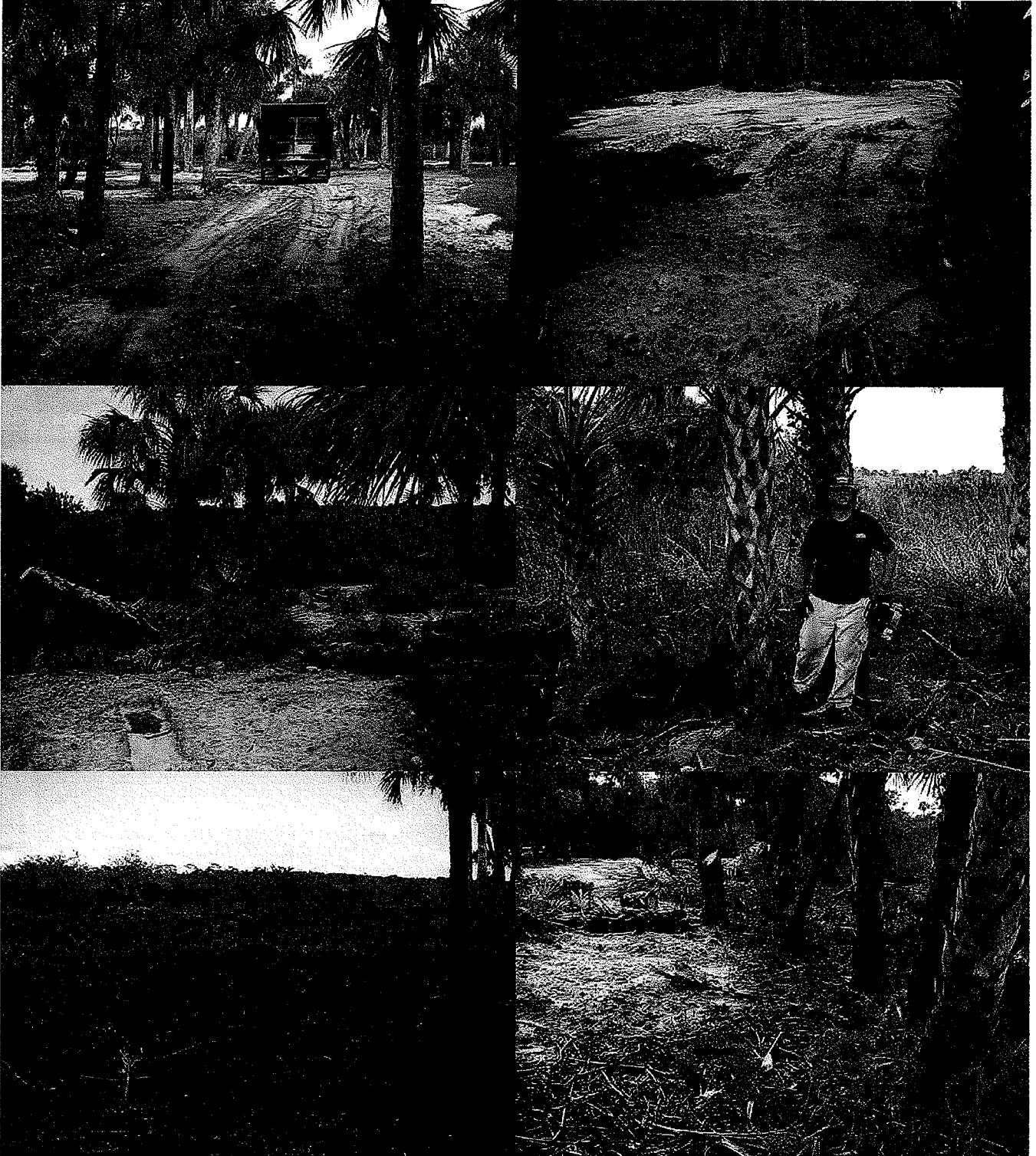
This is the third-time I have observed a turbid discharge entering the river from this development, which is a violation of the OFW designation and Myakka Wild and Scenic River Rule (I'm also copying DEP Law Enforcement on this violation).

Thanks,
Chris

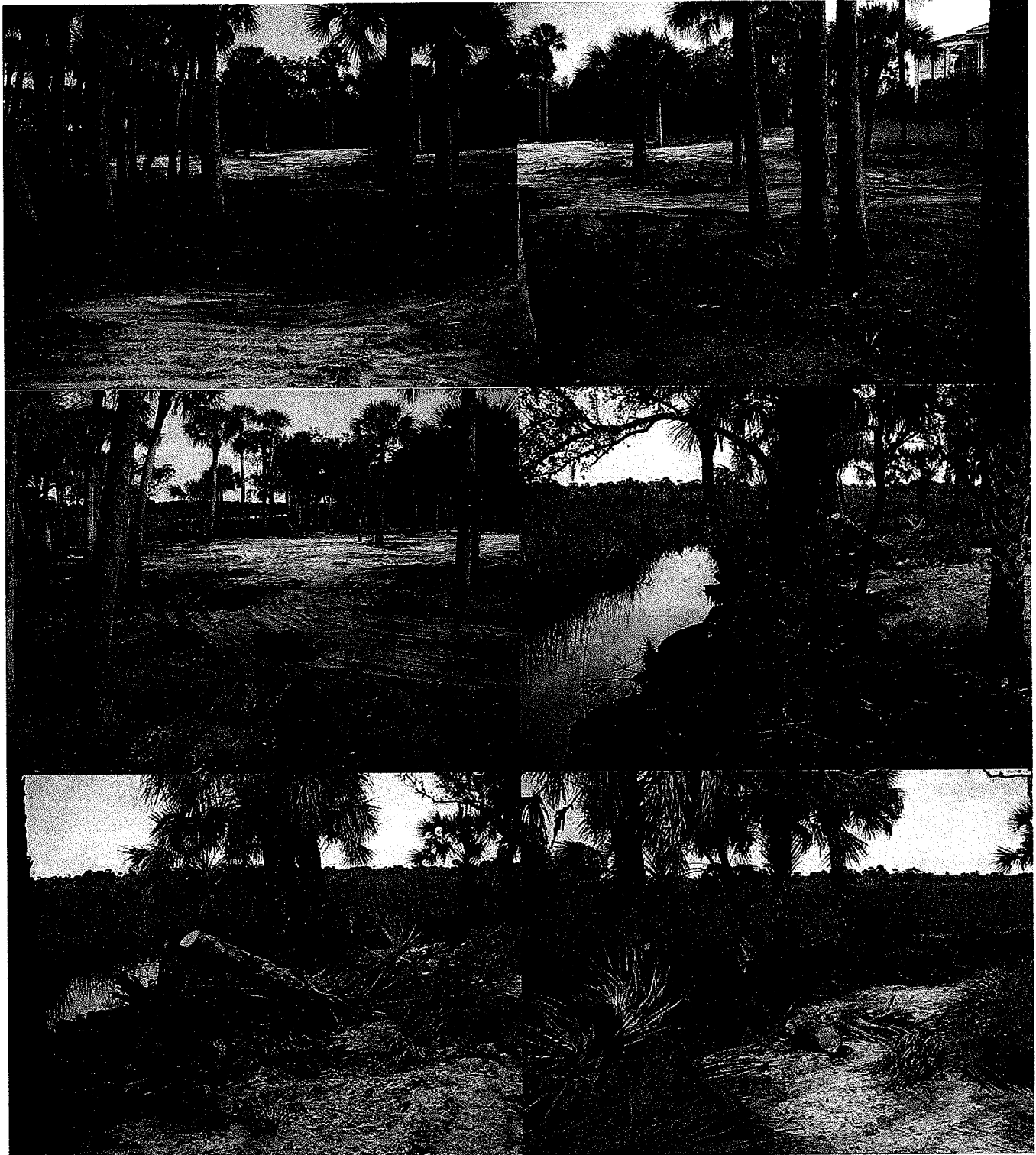
Chris Becker, Environmental Specialist II
Myakka Wild and Scenic River Management Program
1843 South Tamiami Trail
Osprey, FL 34229

(941)486-2053
SC 516-1325
Fax (941)483-5941

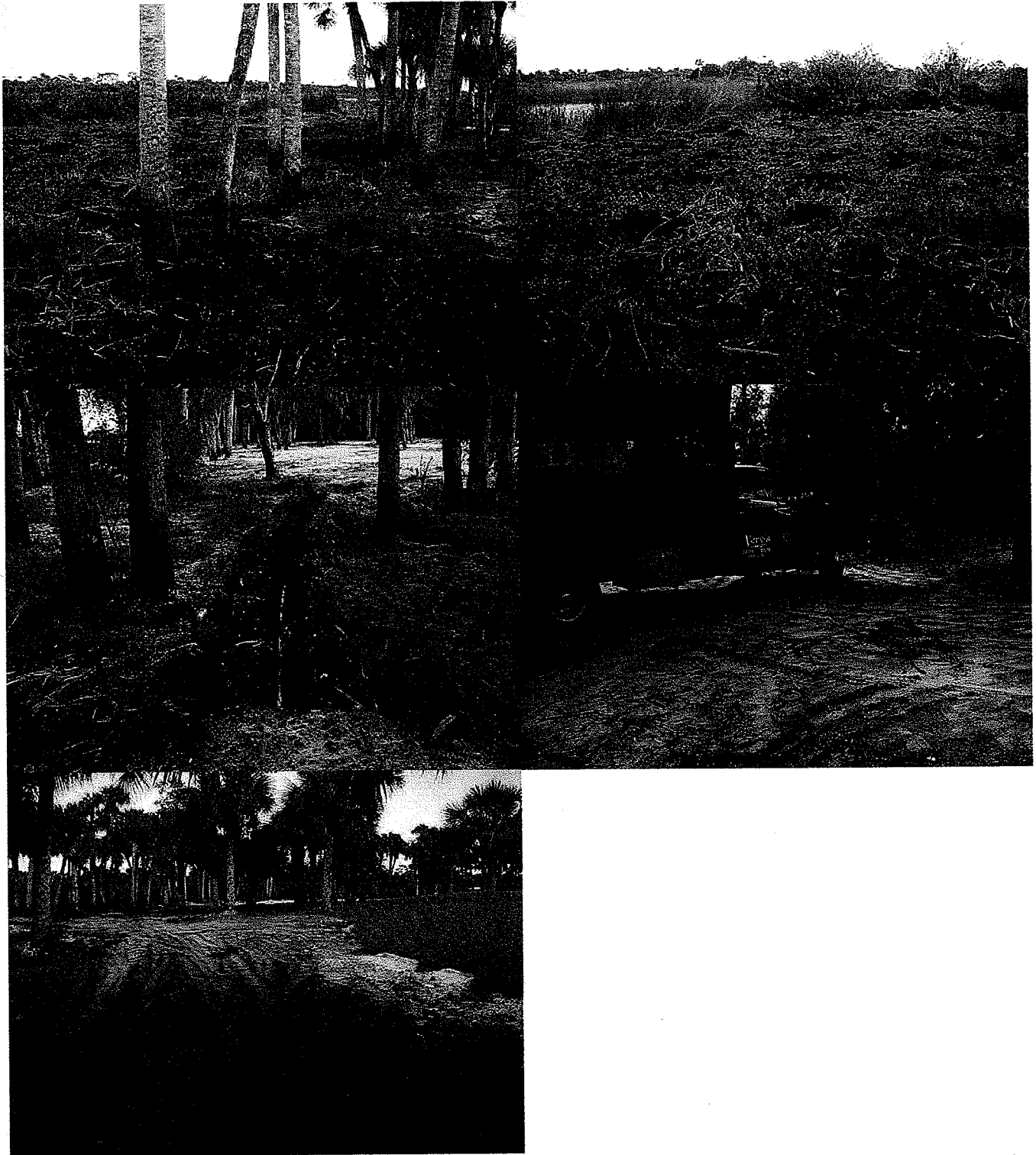
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760 N. River Road. PID#0775-00-1050. Bradford Baker property. December 22, 2003. HB. Unauthorized clearing within Myakka River Protection Zone. Top photos: Access road and fill material brought on site near north side of house. Middle photos: Landscape staff in the process of removing cabbage palms within Myakka River Protection Zone. Lower photos: (left) cleared wetlands, (right) tree removal area and trees marked for removal.



760 N. River Road. PID#0775-00-1050. Bradford Baker property. December 22, 2003. HB. Unauthorized clearing within Myakka River Protection Zone. Top photos and middle left: fill material among cabbage palms. Middle right: ditch to the north of the house. Several cabbage palms marked with orange paint. Several have been cut down. HB observed landscape company staff in the process of removing cabbage palms at this site.



760 N. River Road. PID#0775-00-1050. Bradford Baker property. December 22, 2003. HB. Unauthorized clearing within Myakka River Protection Zone. Top pictures: view of cleared wetlands (primarily leather ferns, some crinum lilies, black needlerush, bulrush, etc.). Middle left: apparent irrigation pipe installation. Middle right: view of landscaping company's truck on site. Lower photo: access drive created along north end of house.



