



MYAKKA RIVER BASIN SURFACE WATER QUALITY STATUS REPORT

The Myakka River watershed has the largest contiguous wetland landscape of the three watersheds. The 66-mile river begins its southerly flow from headwaters in Manatee and Hardee counties. After following a narrow floodplain forest corridor, the river slows and enters a series of lakes in Myakka River State Park, the largest state park in Florida. Deer Prairie Creek and Big Slough feed the river as it widens and enters Charlotte Harbor. The 34-mile portion of Myakka River in Sarasota County is designated a “Florida Wild and Scenic River.”

Cattle ranching dominates the majority of the watershed, especially upstream of Myakka River State Park. To satisfy the need for range and pastureland, much of the watershed was drained and diverted. These alterations enabled some of the drained area to be used for row crops and citrus groves. Other parts of the upper and central portions of the Myakka River watershed have been acquired for state management and protection.

In the lower portion of the Myakka River watershed, urban development is displacing agriculture. Former grazing lands along the banks of the lower Myakka River are now being converted to urban uses, mostly homes. Construction is occurring on the vast inventory of lands that were platted in the 1960s. At that time, these plats displaced

agriculture in western Port Charlotte and in the City of North Port. The Myakka River now becomes even more important to these areas, supplying their drinking water as well as habitat for fish and wildlife.



The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) and its partners conduct water quality monitoring in this area, which is available on the Water Atlas (<http://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu>). This report compares the averages for nutrient concentrations and maximums of bacteria counts collected from 2012 to 2017 to established Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL; 62-304 F.A.C.) or Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC; 62-302 F.A.C.) to determine if water quality is generally good, fair, or poor. Also, waterbodies not currently meeting water quality standards pursuant to the Impaired Waters Rule (IWR 62-303 F.A.C.) are listed.

For more information, please contact Allison Conner or Jennifer Hecker at the CHNEP Program Office.

NUTRIENTS

Nutrient pollution in waters is one of the most widespread water quality problems, caused by excess nitrogen and phosphorus. Too much nitrogen and phosphorus in the water can cause algae to grow excessively; harming water quality, degrading aquatic habitat, and decreasing the dissolved oxygen that fish and other aquatic life need to survive.

Below are some examples of sources of nutrients:

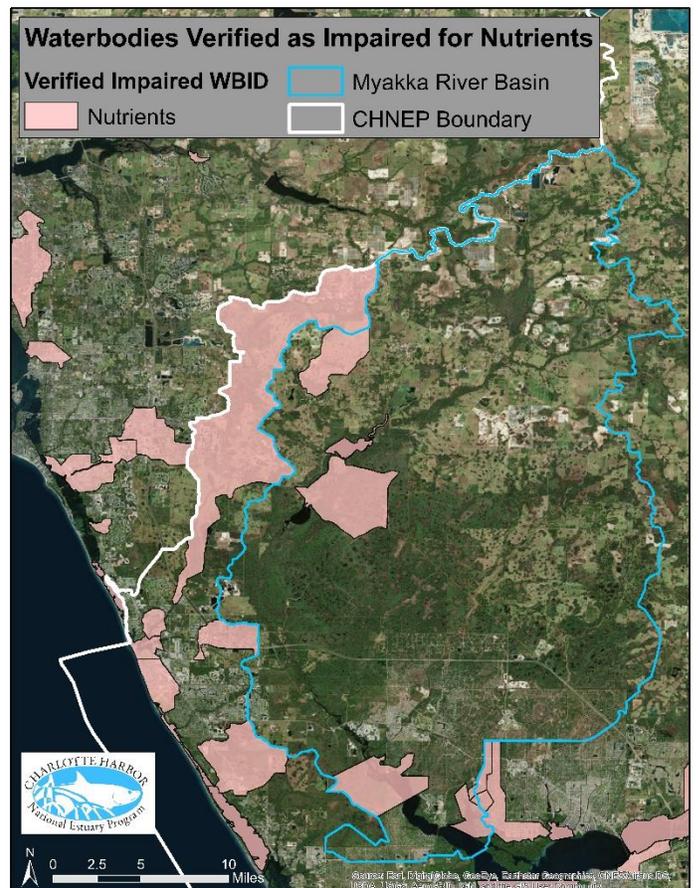
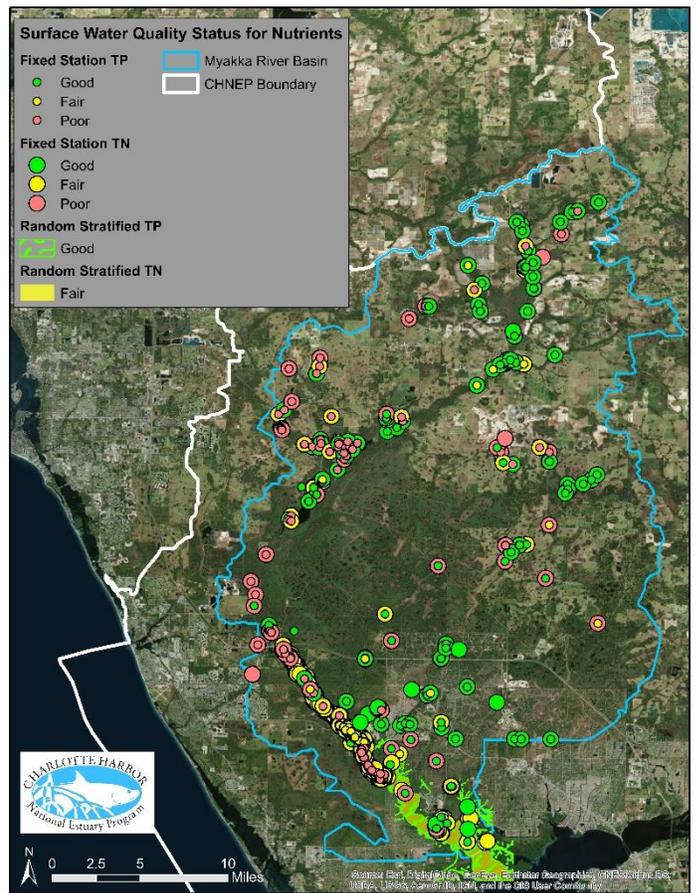
- Sewage treatment plants/domestic point sources
- Industrial sources
- Atmospheric deposition
- Nonpoint sources
- Septic systems
- Ground water
- Fertilizers

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) uses water quality data that meets its quality control standards to identify waterbodies and water segments (WBIDs) that are not meeting the applicable water quality standards and designated uses based on the IWR 62-303 and 62-302, F.A.C. Once a WBID is verified impaired, it is placed on a schedule for TMDL development. TMDLs are waterbody specific pollutant limits aimed at restoring attainment of water quality standards.

The following WBIDs are currently not meeting water quality standards for nutrients:

- Indian Creek
- Lake Myakka
- Myakka River (North Fork)

Pink areas are verified impaired for nutrients on the map to the right. No TMDL development has occurred for nutrients within the Myakka River Basin.



Data source: FDEP.

BACTERIA

Bacteria in the water affect our ability to use the water for drinking, swimming and shellfishing. The state water standards establish bacteria limits for different types of uses. The most stringent standards are for shellfishing areas, followed by drinking water and water used for recreation such as swimming and fishing.

Bacteria come from a variety of sources, but those of most concern come from fecal waste of animals and people. Sources of fecal bacteria include:

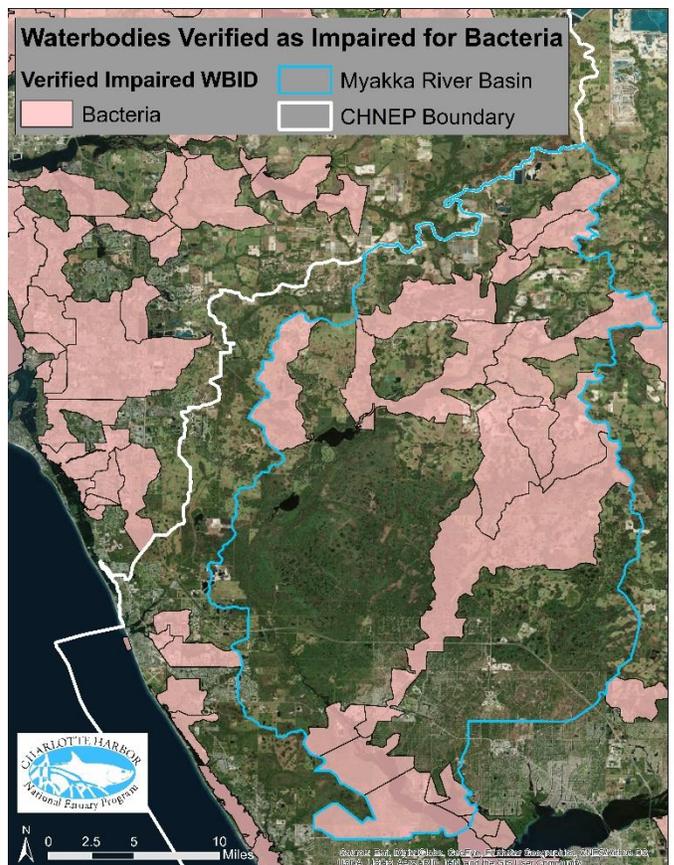
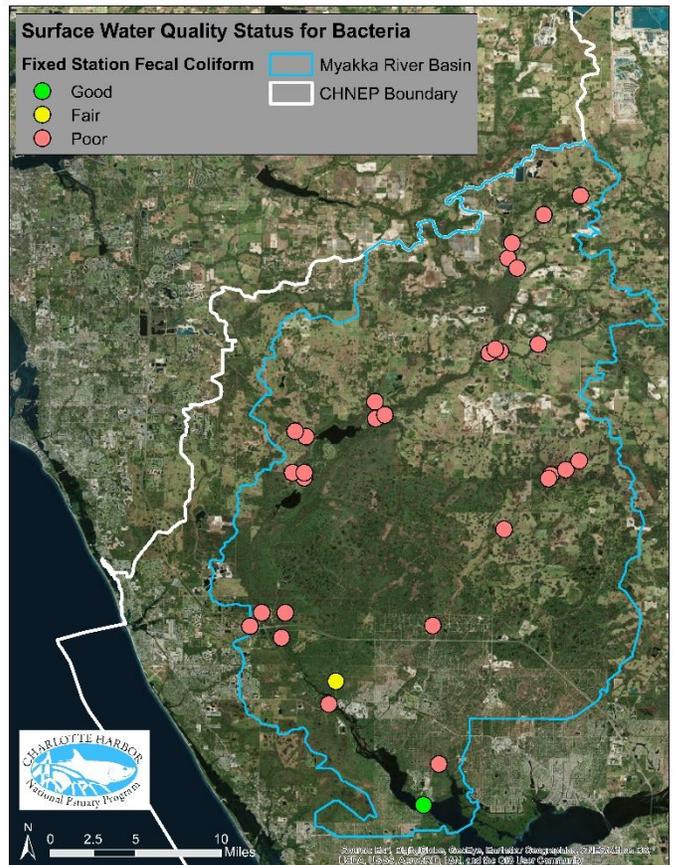
- Malfunctioning septic systems
- Leaking sanitary sewers
- Confined animal feedlots / overgrazing
- Wastewater plant overflows
- Urban pet waste
- Stormwater

Bacteria impairment is determined by FDEP using the same processes as nutrients. In addition, TMDLs are developed for impaired waters to identify the waterbody-specific pollutant target needed for attaining applicable water quality standards.

The following WBIDs are currently not meeting water quality standards for bacteria:

- Big Slough Canal
- Bud Slough
- Howard Creek
- Mud Lake Slough
- Myakka River
- Oglebay Creek
- Owen Creek
- Tippecanoe Bay
- Trailer Park Canal
- Wildcat Slough
- Young Creek

Pink areas are verified impaired for bacteria. No TMDL development for bacteria has occurred within the Myakka River Basin.



Data source: FDEP.

OUTSTANDING FLORIDA WATERS

An Outstanding Florida Water (OFW) is a water designated worthy of special protection because of its natural attributes. This special designation is applied to certain waters and is intended to protect existing good water quality.

Most OFWs are areas managed by the state or federal government as parks, including wildlife refuges, preserves, marine sanctuaries, estuarine research reserves, certain waters within state or national forests, scenic and wild rivers, or aquatic preserves.

Generally, the waters within these managed areas are OFWs because the managing agency has requested this special protection.

However, some of these OFWs are now impaired (as indicated by light blue with peach fill pattern on the map to the right).

The following OFWs are currently not meeting water quality standards:

- Beker Tracts
- Gasparilla Sound – Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve
- Myakka River
- Myakka River State Park
- Myakka Florida Wild and Scenic River Segment



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