

Lake Ann



View of Lake Ann (USF)

This narrative has developed from an interview conducted with Mrs. Belle Colbourn at her home on Lake Ann on August 24, 2001. Mrs. Colbourn spoke about the importance of the lake, her attempts to protect the lake, and future issues that might affect the health of the lake.

Personal History



Lake Ann as seen from the Colbourn's backyard (USF)

In 1978, Mrs. Colbourn moved to Florida with her husband when he became president of the University of Central Florida. The two had always wanted to live on a lake and when they moved to Florida, they made it a point to find lakefront property. The Colbourns were interested in living on a lake because of the attractive view it could provide, as well as the privacy. They were able to find property that they liked on Lake Ann and proceeded to build a home there in 1979.

Mrs. Colbourn enjoys living on Lake Ann because it provides “something pretty to look at.” She says that she and her husband used to canoe a lot on the lake, but they have not been able to do so in recent times. According to Mrs. Colbourn, her neighbors typically use the lake for canoeing and fishing. She says that it is too small for motorboats and water-skiing.

The health of Lake Ann is very important to Mrs. Colbourn. She has been involved in many different activities to help ensure the lake's health. On her own property, Mrs. Colbourn has attempted to keep as much natural vegetation as possible. She and her husband have also been LAKEWATCH volunteers for a number of years. Although they no longer monitor Lake Ann for the program, Mrs. Colbourn continues to watch the lake for any changes she might see. Additionally, she maintains open lines of communication with people on neighboring lakes so that they can work together to solve any problems that might arise. She also stays informed of governmental plans and decisions regarding issues pertaining to Lake Ann.

History/Information



The clear water at the edge of Lake Ann (USF)

Lake Ann is a 15-acre lake located in the Howell Creek Watershed. The lake currently has an elevation of 60.5 feet, and, according to Mrs. Colbourn, the lake level has remained “reasonably steady.” As part of the Howell Creek Watershed, Lake Ann drains into Lake Howell by way of a stream that crosses through both private and public property.

Mrs. Colbourn feels as if the overall condition of Lake Ann has not deteriorated since she moved to the lake. However, recently there have been



Some of the recent oil and algae on the shore of Lake Ann (USF)



Palmetto tree on the Colbourn's shore (USF)

some small changes such as a bloom of southern naiad, a greater growth of algae, and oil floating on the water's surface. These changes might be the result of run-off from Howell Branch Road. In 1994, two retention ponds were built to collect the run-off. One pond is on the eastern side of the lake and the other is on the western side. At the time of the interview, Mrs. Colbourn had already contacted the St. Johns River Water Management District and arranged for someone to come to Lake Ann to make sure the retention ponds were functioning properly.

In addition to the retention ponds, Mrs. Colbourn and three of her neighbors have worked together to deal with issues of unwanted vegetation. They invested in grass carp about seven years ago. However, the fish barriers were recently removed and it is likely that the carp are no longer there. For a time, the neighbors also paid for a service to spray the lake's vegetation. Although the group no longer invests in this service together, Mrs. Colbourn continues to have the aquatic vegetation near her property sprayed. She says that she does not know if any of these actions have been more beneficial than the others, but feels as if Lake Ann's health has been maintained.

Around the lake, there are a variety of trees. When the Colbourns first moved to Lake Ann, they did not know where the edge of the lake was. She says:

"We just selectively cleared back until we could see the water and found little oak trees about three feet tall or a sweet gum about two feet tall and sort of cleared around. What you see is what has grown up from what we left there."

The trees that remain include water oaks, laurel oaks, wax myrtle, bay, and palmetto. The Colbourns have also planted two bald cypress trees to help stabilize the edge of the lake.

According to Mrs. Colbourn, the area around the lake supports "a fair cross-section of life." Since moving to Lake Ann, the numbers and types of animals that she sees has remained stable. Some of the animals include snapping turtles, raccoons, and otters. Mrs. Colbourn also says that there are many snakes in the area. She tells a story of an encounter she and her husband had with a water moccasin:

"There was a tree that bent way down towards the water and my husband and I were walking down there, oh, it must have been ten years ago. Since everything blows onto this section of the lake, I said, 'Oh, look at that. Who would throw a motor cycle tire into the lake? Can you imagine people doing something as destructive as that?' And I said, 'Go up to the house and get a rake and we'll get it off the branch.' So he started up here and I looked at it more closely and realized that whereas it was motorcycle tire size here, it's going down to smaller and smaller at both ends and it was a water moccasin. It had obviously just eaten and was lying down to digest."

Mrs. Colbourn sees many birds around Lake Ann. Some of the birds she sees include ospreys, anhingas, blue herons, sandhill cranes, and owls. According to Mrs. Colbourn, the numbers of birds around Lake Ann have remained consistent except for the belted kingfisher. She has not spotted one in over twenty years.

Development



View of the south side of lake (USF)



Land where apartment complex will be built (USF)

The land surrounding Lake Ann was originally used for citrus groves. The owner of those groves sold off the land, which then, according to Mrs. Colbourn, went through a number of partnerships before being fully developed residentially. One of these partnerships ended with the land around the lake being split, resulting in the land directly on the lake being zoned for country homes and the land near the lake, although not directly on the water, was zoned as numbered lots and became a subdivision.

Currently, there are nine homes on Lake Ann. The Colbourns' home is one of the two most recently built. There is, however, still undeveloped land on the lake. Mrs. Colbourn says:

"The eastern side has an undeveloped 500 odd acres belonging to the Catholic Dioceses. On the western side three acres are retention pond and the rest of that is undeveloped old citrus. Probably, I would say, 14-16 acres left there."

To the north of Lake Ann is a subdivision that was built in the late 1950s to early 1960s. Mrs. Colbourn says that when the University of Central Florida was founded in 1963, some of the new faculty members moved into that subdivision.

Howell Branch Road, which runs to the south of Lake Ann, has been developed with commercial businesses for a number of years. When she moved to Lake Ann in 1979, she says, "Pretty much all of this immediate area was built up with the exception of the land that you still see that is not built up..."

These businesses in the immediate area have not always been successful. Mrs. Colbourn says that there was a time when "a lot of them just went out of business, one after the other after the other. It was a sort of abandoned corner for quite awhile." However, she says that there has been some rejuvenation to the commercial area and some new businesses are being constructed.

The location of Lake Ann is very convenient, making it desirable to developers. Mrs. Colbourn says:

"This is a very convenient area. We're ten minutes from the hospital. We're twenty minutes from Fashion Square. We're twenty minutes from Altamonte Mall. There are two grocery stores within five minutes from us. Everything is right here, yet you feel like you're in the country... We have the best of both worlds, but I'm sure it won't last."

One of the newest plans for construction is an apartment complex with over 200 units that is to be built on the corner of Howell Branch Road and Lake Ann Lane. Mrs. Colbourn has concerns about this future apartment complex. She explains one of her concerns:

"They would then have multi-family zoning abutting right next to country homes, one-acre. The theory has always been that you graduate the zoning. This would not be graduated zoning."

Although she does not believe this apartment complex will have an immediate impact on the lake, she does believe that it will have a great effect on the schools and on the traffic in the area. Traffic is an especially crucial issue because the complex will be using Lake Ann Road as their main entry. This road is rather narrow and could not necessarily support a high increase in traffic. Mrs. Colbourn does fear for the health of the lake if, in the future, the complex would be expanded to the other side of the road, which would border Lake Ann. If this should happen, the lake might be directly impacted by the increase in the number of people using it.

The Future



Lily pads on Lake Ann (USF)

Lake Ann has been able to maintain its health over the years. One of the factors that has allowed the lake to sustain its health has likely been the limited development on the lake. Furthermore, the residential developments on the lake have been single family homes on at least one-acre lots. Without a high number of people living on the lake and using it, the human impact has been minimal. If she could have her wish, Mrs. Colbourn would like Lake Ann to stay the way it is now. However, she realizes that this situation cannot necessarily be maintained in the future because of the “pressure for land.” At best, she hopes to be able to influence the type of development that occurs on and near the lake.

In the immediate neighborhood, the addition of the apartment complex on Lake Ann Road and Howell Branch Road poses a threat to the general quality of life. With the addition of over 200 apartment units to a neighborhood that is traditionally comprised of single-family homes, the influx of people is sure to be felt.

One of the biggest threats to the future of the lake itself is the possibility that the undeveloped land around the lake will be developed. Although there are no current plans to build up this land, it is privately owned, leaving open the possibility of future construction. Should the future development on Lake Ann be high-density, then the health of the lake might become negatively affected. If, however, the developers take into consideration the health of the lake, then a balance might be attained and Lake Ann can continue to remain healthy.

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