

Our Water Source:

The Hillsborough River

When you turn on the faucet, do you ever wonder where the water comes from?

Tampa is unique because most of our city's water comes from the **Hillsborough River**. Most other cities use groundwater or wells. The use of river water is possible mostly because of the river's size, location and high water quality.

The river runs right through the City so its location makes it a good source for surface water withdrawals. With a typical flow rate of over **250 million gallons** per day, there's a lot of water to meet the needs of our city. Luckily, the water is also pretty clean and clear, meaning that we have to do little to make it drinkable.

We depend on rainfall!

The more it rains, the higher the river, the more water we have available to use. All of the area that collects rainfall and drains into an individual river or stream system is called a **watershed**. The highest part of the watershed or basin is north and east of the borders of Hillsborough County in an area called the Green Swamp. It is an 850-square-mile area of swampy flatlands and sandy ridges located in Lake, Polk, Sumter and Pasco County. This area provides additional freshwater flow into the Hillsborough River every time it rains.

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The River flows 54 miles in a southwesterly direction, winding through the city until it reaches Hillsborough Bay. The path it takes has created a natural wildlife **corridor**, where you might find the **Great Blue Heron**, the **Snowy Egret**, the **Florida alligator**, and more than 21 species of threatened or endangered plants. The protection of this area is vital for our drinking water as well as our ecosystem, an area where plants and animals live together in an environment.

Great Blue Heron

Why do we use a dam?

Sometimes, the water flow of the river varies, and it's necessary to use a dam to create a storage reservoir for year round use. The Hillsborough River Dam, built in 1890, blocks off the river and allows for a controlled amount of water. This dam can store over one and a half billion gallons of water!

Snowy Egret

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There are also times when there is not a lot of rain and we experience a **drought**, or dry season. Demand for water goes up and the river is not enough to meet this demand. In this case, we use regional groundwater. The City also uses Aquifer Storage and Recovery wells, which store water in the ground when river flow is high and pumps it out in times of need.

QUICK FACT

On average the city uses **77 million gallons** of drinking water per day!

What happens before we can drink it?

Before you can drink or use the water from the river, it must go through an extensive treatment process to make it safe. Tampa's water treatment plant has been making our drinking water safe since 1924. It is one of the largest surface water treatment facilities in Florida! By the time it reaches your faucet, the water has gone through a six-step treatment process and is safe for you to drink and cook with.

The future depends on you

Using river water is a great use of the earth's natural resources. However, as our population grows, we need to remember to save water! Conserving water and keeping the demand of water low will allow us to continue to use the river's clean and clear water as our source of drinking water for years and years.

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Topic Review - Matching

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ___ 1. Tampa's main source of drinking water | A. Conservation |
| ___ 2. Creates a storage area for water | B. Drought |
| ___ 3. Dry season with little rain | C. Endangered |
| ___ 4. Water storage underground | D. Watershed |
| ___ 5. Saving water | E. Wells |
| ___ 6. Threatened plants/animals | F. Dam |
| ___ 7. Area that collects rainfall and drains into a river | G. Hillsborough River |

Fill in the Blank

1. Tampa is unique because it uses the _____ instead of _____ like other cities.
2. The River is a good source of water because of its _____, _____, and _____.
3. The path the river takes creates a _____, where you might find Great Blue Heron, the Snowy Egret, the Florida alligator, and more than 21 species of threatened or endangered plants.
4. In order to be able to continue to use the Hillsborough River as our drinking source for years to come, we must _____ water!

Answer
(backwards)

1. G
2. F
3. B
4. E
5. A
6. C
7. D
8. or wells
9. Hillsborough River; groundwater
10. conservation
11. dam
12. watershed
13. high water quality
14. corridor
15. size; location; high water quality
16. save/conservation

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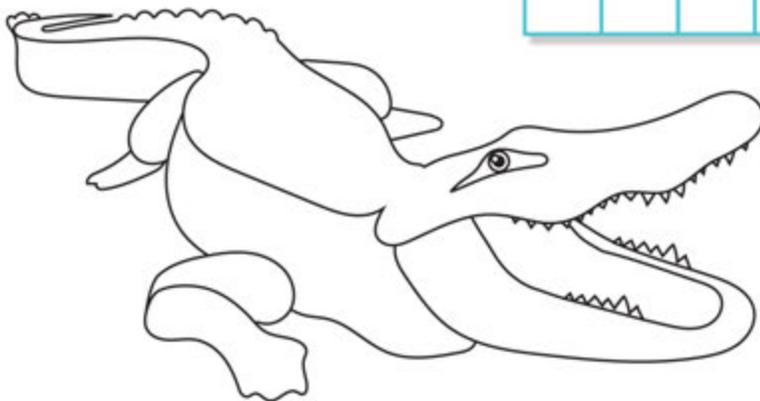
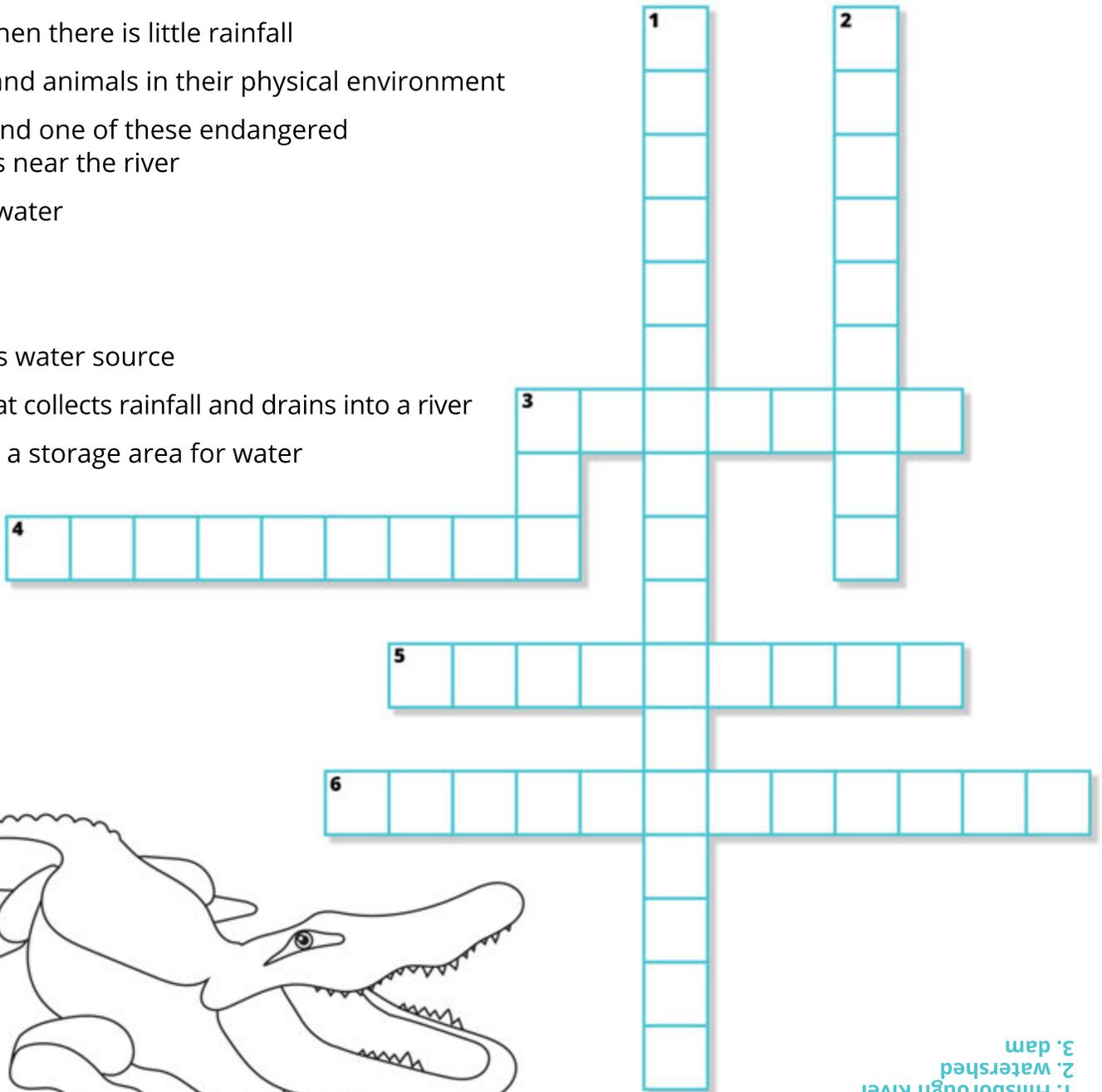
Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

3. Time when there is little rainfall
4. Plants and animals in their physical environment
5. Might find one of these endangered animals near the river
6. Saving water

DOWN

1. Tampa's water source
2. Area that collects rainfall and drains into a river
3. Creates a storage area for water



- Across
3. drought
 4. ecosystem
 5. alligator
 6. conservation
- Down
1. Hillsborough River
 2. watershed
 3. dam

Answer
(backwards)



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Help the water find its way through the treatment pipes!

