



Golf course called key to bay quality

Earle Kimel Sarasota Herald-Tribune | USA TODAY NETWORK

The former 49-acre Gulf Gate Executive Golf Course could be one of several keys to foster the continued improvement of water quality in Sarasota Bay, or a 106-home subdivision retrofitted inside one of Sarasota County's first master-planned communities. Environmentalists, water quality proponents and area residents – including members of the Gulf Gate Community Association – can envision the course, laid out on three sections already interspaced between existing homes, as the site of a county project that could both provide additional stormwater cleansing and help alleviate potential flooding.

"To get 49 acres in that particular area of the county it would be an unbelievable acquisition," Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Neunder said at the Oct. 24 meeting where the idea of county purchase of the course was discussed.

The golf course is the largest available parcel west of Beneva Road and is less than one mile from Sarasota Bay and less than two miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

Gulf Gate is part of Neunder's district and he has worked with members of the Gulf Gate Community Association.

David Tomasko – the new executive director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program – said the property offers an opportunity for a large-scale regional stormwater retrofit similar to one established to help clean up Hudson Bayou, and the anticipated impact on stormwater quality that the redevelopment of the Bobby Jones Golf Course in Sarasota should have.

The Bobby Jones project is expected to treat water runoff from eight square miles of the Phillippi Creek watershed and take "a couple of tons of

"These large, regional stormwater retrofit projects require open land."

David Tomasko

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

