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WP Lake chain history explained

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The Winter Park Lakes and Waterways system is part of the Howell Branch basin which begins in Orlando with Lake Dot and Spring Lake and empties into the St. Johns river through Lake Jessup.

This basin was formed by the last of six major land uprisings which occurred in prehistoric times, then modified by the natural forces of erosion. With the exception of a few artesian lakes and those resulting from sinkhole formation, the lakes and waterways of the Howell Branch system lie in the lowest central part of the basin and flow northeast to empty as stated above, into the St. Johns River.

Soil formation in this basin is of the porous type overlying clays and limestone which result in considerable underground movement of water. This water flows either directly into the subterranean aquifers or laterally through the soil into the lakes at the bottom of the basin. No significant percolation of water flow occurs through the lake bottoms.

Recharge of these lakes and waterways occurs mainly from run-off of rain water, from subsurface movement of water through the soil and, to a minor extent, from artesian spring sources.

With development of the land in and around the Howell Branch basin, water has increasingly been diverted into the lakes through a system of storm water drains. Virtually every drop of water which flows onto pav-

ed streets and impervious surfaces ends up in the lakes. Because of direct entry into the lakes, the water has no chance of filtering through the soil and therefore carries with it great quantities of debris and pollution; chemical, particulate and dissolved.

Further, there is constant indirect contamination of the lakes through underground flow carrying with it dissolved chemicals such as fertilizers and insecticides. Even homes and businesses located at a considerable distance on the edges of the basin contribute to pollution.

Virtually every individual, each residence and business in this area, and each and every vehicle which passes through the Howell Branch basin is a direct source of pollution. Rain water, whether falling from a roof, coursing through soil or draining from a driveway into the streets carries with it the materials which are polluting and killing our lakes.

By the early '70s, the storm water run-off drainage system was completed in Winter Park. Contamination of the lakes was assured by this mechanism. Further pollution continues through the natural cycling of aquatic plants, degradation of exotic water plants controlled by herbiciding, run-off from the streets and lawns, animal and possibly human waste flowing into the lakes.

The Winter Park Lakes are our most valuable naturally occurring asset. The major lakes are accessible from the Dinky Dock and Fort Maitland ramps. Parks are located on the three largest lakes and many of the smaller. Lakefront property owners pay a disproportionately greater amount in taxes for the privilege of living on the water than those who do not. Many visitors to the Winter Park Lakes carry home with them memories of beauty and fascination, memories of a unique characteristic which is a major contributor to the Winter Park personality.

Every one of us is in some way responsible for the progressive decline in the water quality of the lakes and waterways in Winter Park, whether we live on them or not. Because of this fact, each individual and business must share the responsibility for helping to restore the lakes and waterways to their former condition.

Next week: Dr. Madison will outline ways the lakes can be