

# A Bridge Too Tasty

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Published: October 5, 1998

**T**hey slither and slime, and they like to live in wooden houses. Unfortunately, the wood that one colony of wood-boring worms chose is holding up a bridge in Palm Beach, Florida.

The worms, members of a pesky breed, known as limnoria, recently shut down two of the four-lanes of the Royal Park Bridge that spans Lake Worth Lagoon. The wood-munching annelids bored through such a large span of the bridge's timber piles that the state Department of Transportation thought its safety questionable enough to close half of it. Two of the four lanes are now off-limits to the more than 20,000 drivers who used the bridge every day. This has increased traffic considerably in the other two lanes that remain open.

Designed with a deck and sand-fill arches, the section now infested with worms was built in 1929 with timber piling. The other half, added on in 1957, is supported with concrete—and presumably worm-proof. But the older part of the structure still provides “lateral support to the newer part,” says town engineer Jim Bowser. “So we can't tear down the decayed side without weakening the rest of the bridge.”

The solution? The DOT will have a temporary bridge built to the south of the Royal Park Bridge, which will be demolished and rebuilt. “We're estimating it will take about two years to design and build a new bridge,” says Joe Borello, a program manager for the DOT. In addition to clearing high tide by at least 21 feet, the new bridge will rest on a heap of concrete—and promises to be impervious to worms.