



## Noose at lake sparks inquiry

**Tampa police are investigating whether it falls under a hate crime law.**

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TAMPA - Who hung a noose at Lake Roberta?

Tampa police want to know.

Gael Murphy, 59, was at the Seminole Heights lake on Feb. 11 checking on a drainage project when she said she noticed a nylon rope dangling above the head of a subcontractor she was speaking with.

"I look up and it's a noose!" she said Wednesday. "There's nothing like a noose."

Murphy, an animal rights advocate who lives in Egypt Lake, was originally touring the area after getting complaints from neighbors that a drainage project there was affecting wildlife.

While those complaints didn't appear to be substantiated, Murphy said what she did find that day concerned her enough to contact the company doing the work, the NAACP and the city.

Eventually, Tampa police got involved.

"It's something we're taking very, very seriously," Tampa police spokeswoman Andrea Davis said Wednesday.

Detectives are investigating the matter to determine whether it meets the specific requirements of a hate crime under Florida law, she said. There has been no determination as to who tied and hung the rope.

Murphy said that when she first noticed the noose, she was speaking with a supervisor with Kamminga & Roodvoets, a subcontractor hired by the city of Tampa to do work there.

"I didn't do it!" she said the supervisor responded after she called it to his attention. "We didn't do it."

No one with Kamminga & Roodvoets could be reached Wednesday evening to talk about the incident.

Murphy said she soon noticed the yellow and blue rope appeared to match one wrapped around extra drainage piping, positioned directly below where the noose hung.

Already prepared to take pictures and video of the work being performed at the lake, which is near Clifton and Nebraska avenues, Murphy and others accompanying her took pictures and video of the noose.

Soon after, she said, the same Kamminga & Roodvoets supervisor she'd been talking to cut the noose down.

Murphy said most of the crew was white, but one black worker appeared to her to be uncomfortable with the situation, though he said nothing.